

# DRAFT

## Snohomish County Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan

A COMPONENT OF THE GMA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



September 2012

Snohomish County Parks & Recreation

## Acronyms

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

CIP – Capital Improvement Program

CPP – Countywide Planning Policies for Snohomish County

GPP – General Policy Plan

GMA – Growth Management Act

ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act

LOS – Level-of-service

MPP – Multicounty Planning Policies

MUGA – Municipal Urban Growth Area

NPDES – National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

OFM – Washington State Office of Financial Management

ORV – Off road vehicle

PDS – Snohomish County Department of Planning and Development Services

PSRC – Puget Sound Regional Council

RCFB - Recreation and Conservation Funding Board

RCO – Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office

RCW – Revised Code of Washington

REET - Real Estate Excise Tax

RV – Recreational vehicle

SCC – Snohomish County Code

SCT – Snohomish County Tomorrow

SWM – Snohomish County Surface Water Management (a division of the Public Works Department)

TDR – Transfer of Development Rights

UGA – Urban Growth Area

## Preface

This Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan ('Plan') is a component of Snohomish County's Growth Management Act (GMA) Comprehensive Plan and is prepared in accordance with requirements specified in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.70A.070. Snohomish County's Comprehensive Plan is made up of five separate documents (or sections) that work together to guide county actions. This Plan is one of these sections and works together with the General Policy Plan (GPP) and Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) sections to specifically guide Snohomish County Department of Parks and Recreation (Park) activities. The GMA requires a review of Comprehensive Plans at least every ten years, but the Park Plan is renewed at least every six years, due to requirements by the State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

The RCO is a major source of park grant funding and provides specific planning criteria for fund recipients. Some RCO planning requirements are the same as GMA requirements and some are different. A summary of all requirements this Plan seeks to address is listed below, as well as the location where the required elements may be found within this Plan (*italicized*) or in other documents.

### Required Elements Summary

<b>GMA Park and Recreation Element Requirements RCW 36.70A.070(8)</b> <b>A park and recreation element that implements, and is consistent with the capital facilities plan element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. The element shall include:</b>	
<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Location</b>
(a) Estimates of park and recreation demand for at least a ten-year period	<i>Chapter II. Park and Recreation Demand</i>
(b) An evaluation of facilities and service needs	<i>Chapter III. Park and Recreation Need</i>
(c) An evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand	<i>Chapter IV. Intergovernmental Coordination</i>
<b>GMA Capital Facilities Plan Element Requirements RCW 36.70A.070(3)</b> <b>A capital facilities (including park and recreation facilities) plan element consisting of:</b>	
(a) An inventory of existing capital facilities owned by public entities, showing the locations and capacities of the capital facilities	<i>Chapter III. Park and Recreation Need</i> <i>Appendix A. Park Maps</i> Capital Facilities Plan
(b) A forecast of the future needs for such capital facilities	<i>Chapter III. Park and Recreation Need</i>

(c) The proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new capital facilities	<i>Chapter V. Park and Recreation Need Appendix B. Action Plan Maps</i>
(d) At least a six-year plan that will finance such capital facilities within projected funding capacities and clearly identified sources of public money for such purposes	Snohomish County Capital Improvement Plan
(e) A requirement to reassess the land use element if probable funding falls short of meeting existing needs and to ensure that the land use element, capital facilities plan element, and financing plan within the capital facilities plan element are coordinated and consistent.	Snohomish County Capital Facility Plan
<b>RCO Planning Requirements (RCO Manual 2: Planning Policies, Jan 2011)</b>	
1. Goals and objectives	<i>Chapter V. Implementation Measures</i>
2. Inventory	<i>Chapter III. Park and Recreation Need</i>
3. Public involvement	<i>Chapter I. Introduction</i>
4. Demand and need analysis (Level-of-service Assessment is optional)	<i>Chapter III. Park and Recreation Need</i>
5. Capital improvement program	Snohomish County Capital Improvement Plan
6. Plan adoption	—

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## I. Introduction

Parks Mission Statement:

***“Provide safe, enjoyable, attractive parks and diverse programs with responsive services which enhance our quality of life and preserve the natural and recreational resources of Snohomish County.”***

### A. Purpose of the Plan

The Snohomish County Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) is pleased to present the 2013 Snohomish County Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan (Plan). As Parks approaches its fifty-year anniversary, this Plan provides a chance to review progress toward achieving Parks’ Mission and to identify operational adjustments that will help ensure continued success in implementing it. This Plan, a component of the Snohomish County Growth Management Act (GMA) Comprehensive Plan, is prepared pursuant to Chapter 36.70A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). This Plan works together with and is informed by other planning documents, including: the Snohomish County General Policy Plan (GPP), the Snohomish County Capital Facilities Plan (CFP), the Countywide Planning Policies for Snohomish County (CPP), which are developed by Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT), and Multicounty Planning Policies (MPP), which are developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC).

In addition to addressing GMA planning requirements and ensuring consistency with the documents listed above, this Plan also addresses requirements established by the State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). The RCO is a major funding source for park projects and has established specific planning requirements for fund recipients. Some RCO requirements parallel those identified in the RCW and some are in addition. The specific planning requirements of both the GMA and RCO, and their location in this document, are listed in the Preface section of this Plan.

Beyond meeting the GMA and RCO requirements outlined in the Preface section of the Plan, this document includes additional narrative, goals and objectives to guide Parks as it considers future activities and

opportunities over the use period of the Plan. Parks works continually to refine its approach to diverse issues such as rural vs. urban park service provision, property acquisition, innovative funding approaches, facility maintenance and replacement strategies, operations, program provision, interjurisdictional coordination, and sustainability. This Plan describes a departmental approach for addressing these, and other issues and also provides tools to support advancements in all these areas.

## **B. Policy Foundation**

The GPP is updated every ten years and the current version was adopted effective February of 2006, with a subsequent series of amendments. The GPP provides policy direction for the components of the County's GMA Comprehensive Plan and as such provides broad guidance for Snohomish County activities. The GPP is currently in the process of being updated and it is expected that an update will be adopted in 2015. The 2015 version of the GPP will include updated population estimates through 2035, which were not available for the creation of this Plan. This Plan will be reevaluated in light of the new population projections, as well as updated policies, as part of the GPP update process.

The Snohomish County GPP includes a series of chapters addressing topics such as land use, housing, transportation and the natural environment. A number of these chapters include goals, objectives and associated policies that pertain to Parks' activities, but within the Capital Facilities chapter a park specific goal, with associated objectives and policies, is identified. This goal states:

**Goal CF7 Continue to develop and maintain a system of parks to meet the needs of current and future residents for both community and regional recreational opportunities**

**Objective CF 7.A Acquire parklands and develop recreational facilities to meet existing and projected growth needs in accordance with the guidelines and priorities specified in the Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan**

**CF Policy 7.A.1 Continue to regularly identify and prioritize community and regional park and recreational needs throughout**

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- unincorporated Snohomish County, using public input from citizens, stakeholder groups, school districts, park and recreation districts and cities
- CF Policy 7.A.2      The county shall use the Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan as the primarily guidance document in determining future projects and developing the 6-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
- CF Policy 7.A.3      The county shall place high priority on using existing county park sites to their full potential and best use for passive or active recreation
- Objective CF 7.B      Implement the capital park acquisition and development priorities, using a wide range of funding sources including park bond issues. Augment the local funding with outside sources wherever possible in order to make the most efficient use of revenues**
- CF Policy 7.B.1      The county shall utilize impact fees as authorized under the GMA to help fund the cost of parkland and facilities expansion and as required to serve new development
- CF Policy 7.B.2      The county shall monitor and adjust, when appropriate, its park impact fee program
- Objective CF 7.C      Monitor and maintain minimum level-of-service standards, as defined in the Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan and the CFP, through adequate CIP funding**
- CF Policy CF 7.C.1      The county shall perform annual assessments of its parkland acquisition and facility development programs as part of the 6-year CIP
- Objective CF 7.D      Ensure that parklands and facilities are maintained and operated in a safe and efficient manner**

Language in this section of the GPP refers to the priorities identified in this Plan, as well as priorities identified through public input, which is a large component of Plan development and is one means of collecting this information.

Narrative, goals and objectives are included in this Plan to support and implement the above section of the GPP. In addition to the Capital Facilities goal repeated above, other goals, objectives and policies in the Population and Employment, Land Use, Transportation, Economic Development, Natural Environment, and Interjurisdictional Coordination sections of the GPP relate to portions of this Plan.

The most recent compilation of the CPPs was adopted in 2011 and was developed by SCT, a forum comprised of representatives from the Snohomish County cities, Snohomish County and the Tulalip Tribes. The objective of this group is to develop policies for the purpose of encouraging consistency between city and county comprehensive planning. The CPPs cover many of the areas of the GPP, including housing, economic development and employment, transportation, the natural environment and public services and facilities. The function of the document is *"[To] more clearly distinguish between the roles and responsibilities of the county, cities, Tribes, state and other governmental agencies in managing Snohomish County's future growth, and to ensure greater interjurisdictional cooperation and coordination in the provision of services"* (Snohomish County Tomorrow, 1990). The CPP are a new consideration to this Plan (they were unavailable at the time of previous Plan development) and have informed several of the changes in this Plan, specifically in the areas of urban vs. rural service provision.

### **C. Capital Facility Plan**

The current CFP was effective as of Feb. 1, 2006 and discusses public facilities provided by Snohomish County. The goal of the CFP is to establish and track level-of-service standards for capital facilities identified as 'necessary to support development,' forecast new or expanded facilities needed to support population growth and provide the basis for the 6 year CIP. The CFP further meets RCW requirements by including an inventory of existing public facilities and identifying proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new capital facilities. The CFP also evaluates funding projections against identified facility

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needs, so that reassessment of the Comprehensive Plan will occur if funding is not expected to be available for facility needs.

In order to track the progress of the county in meeting CFP projections, an annual Statement of Assessment is issued, reporting level-of-service data for facilities identified as ‘necessary to support development.’ For Snohomish County Parks, only Community Parks are currently identified as ‘necessary to support development’ and calculations of number of Community Parks per new and overall residents are tracked and reported in this document.

This Plan works together with the CFP to implement the level-of-service standards contained within the CFP and to provide updated information on needs and vision for provision of park services, which will influence the content of the CFP during the next update.

#### **D. GMA Requirements and Compliance**

The GMA is the primary driver for the above referenced documents. GMA was enacted by the Washington Legislature in 1990 in response to rapid state-wide growth and uncoordinated and unplanned development, which led to concerns about impacts to the environment, quality of life and other related issues. The overarching goal of GMA is to coordinate planning efforts and establish Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) in which to focus population expansion. The GMA is codified in RCW 36.70A and addresses 12 major goals to “guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations...” (RCW 36.70A.020). Of these goals, the following are most closely related to the development of this Plan:

1. Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
3. Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
5. Economic development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new

businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

9. Open space and recreation. Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop park and recreation facilities.
10. Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
11. Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
12. Public facilities and services. Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

This Plan contributes to the county's compliance with GMA by ensuring consistency with other components of the Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan and specifically addressing requirements of the Park Element (see Preface).

## **E. RCO Requirements**

Lastly, the RCO planning requirements parallel many of the goals and requirements of GMA planning and are summarized in the Preface section of this Plan. Similar to the GMA, the RCO requires a facilities inventory, demand and need analysis, capital improvement program and adoption by authoring jurisdictions. The RCO differs from the GMA in requiring goals and objectives as a component of this Plan, although GMA based planning inherently becomes founded on goals, objectives and the development of policies while following GMA planning guidelines. For park planning purposes, policies related to Park activities are contained within the GPP. The RCO also requires that Park Plans be updated on a six-year cycle, which is the reason updates to this Plan are on a different schedule than other county planning documents.

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## **F. Method of Plan Development**

This Plan has been developed through a process of collecting and reviewing current policy and inventory information, soliciting input from the general public and park stakeholders, projecting expected future conditions through 2025, developing a vision for the Parks Department along that same timeline, and developing goals to achieve that vision.

The major policy documents that were considered in developing this Plan are outlined above. In addition to these documents, an update of the Parks Department's county-wide recreation inventory was also conducted to insure current information was available, identifying both county holdings and recreation amenities made available to the public by other entities such as cities, school districts, state and federal providers.

### **Public Input**

As in years past, extensive public input was sought for development of this Plan via methods including random and directed surveys, public meetings, invitation to submit written, verbal or email comments, and press releases. Soliciting input from individuals who use the parks and participate in park activities is critical to the success of any comprehensive plan. Public input not only provides valuable insight into current park and program use, it also helps to define the need for new or additional parklands and facilities.

One method of gathering input was to hold a series of public meetings in various locations around the county. Introductory public meetings were held to describe the purpose of the Plan and to seek feedback on what the public most valued in park facilities. These meetings were held in Monroe (Aug. 15, 2011), Arlington (Aug. 23, 2011) and unincorporated Snohomish County (Sept. 8, 2011). Invitations were mailed to interested parties and advertised through a press release, fliers and the Parks e-newsletter. Follow-up public meetings were also held in the spring of 2012 to present the draft Plan and solicit feedback on the Plan direction. These meetings were held in Monroe (May 1, 2012) and Everett (June 7, 2012). Invitations were mailed/emailed to interested parties and advertised through press releases, fliers and Parks e-newsletter.

In addition to public meetings, the following methods were used to obtain public input into the Plan:

- Press releases informing the public about the Plan development process and inviting participation in either meetings or other methods of feedback issued Aug. 2, 2011, April 16, 2012 and May 31, 2012
- Solicitation for public input on county Parks website
- Random survey sent to approximately 20,000 county residents (unincorporated and incorporated)
- Modified surveys were made available to the public through the Parks e-newsletter and as hard copy (distributed at events such as Evergreen State Fair)
- Meetings with other recreation providers in Snohomish County (cities, YMCA, school districts, etc.)
- Presentation to Snohomish County Tomorrow Planning Advisory Committee June 14, 2012
- Collation of comments received via email, phone calls, etc.
- Briefings and discussions with Snohomish County Parks Board (2011: Feb. 8, March 8, April 12, June 7, July 12, Sept. 13, Oct. 11 and Nov. 8; 2012: Feb. 14, July 10)
- Snohomish County Planning Commission briefings (June 26 and Aug. 28, 2012) and hearing (July 24, 2012)
- Snohomish County Council briefings (April 16, May 21 and Sept. \_\_\_, 2012) and hearing (Nov. \_\_\_ 2012)

In addition to efforts to collect public input, input from Parks staff was also incorporated into development of this Plan. The entire Parks Department was invited to participate in a survey intended to identify both areas of opportunity and areas of improvement. Following collection of input from the public and staff, a Parks Advisory Team was formed by representatives from the various sections of the Parks Department, which met to review input collected from the public, as well as create the Parks Vision that is presented later in this document.

Data used to develop this plan was focused around population projections and expected geographic areas of growth. Current population projections available at the time of Plan development forecasted Snohomish County population through 2025. This information is the same basis used for development of the 2007 Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan and analysis completed to locate future Community Parks in that Plan is still valid. In addition to population data, trends in age demographics, health trends and

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projected recreation demands were considered to guide the types of facilities that should be provided.

Finally, Parks has put together an updated Vision for the department. The Parks' Vision takes a broad view of how the department functions and what it provides, while being pragmatic about balancing current needs with forecasts for future conditions. This Vision has evolved through the process of creating this Plan and is centered around key ideas described in detail later in this Plan. This Vision leads directly to the goals, objectives and strategies presented in this Plan.

This Plan identifies and addresses the county's park needs through the year 2025. The Plan will be revisited in six years, as required by the RCO, but the Plan takes a long-range view in evaluating where Parks should go and what steps are needed to achieve that vision. Goals, objectives and strategies are provided which provide direction and implementation strategies through the year 2025. These goals and objectives build upon the policies contained in the GPP and provide additional detail on park priorities. The 2013 Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan for Snohomish County also consists of a series of appendices, including a Maps Appendix that includes information for each park property. Each map includes a description of the park, unique features, history and future plans. This Appendix can be used as a citizen guide to Snohomish County's entire park system and to encourage the use of Snohomish County's outdoor recreation offerings.

## II. Park and Recreation Demand

### A. Projected County Conditions

Snohomish County has, in recent years, experienced the fastest growth rate of the four central Puget Sound counties. This new population creates the need for additional parks of all types and attention to park elements which meet emerging needs (e.g. natural resource protection and accessible facilities for aging populations). The basis for planning utilized in this Snohomish County Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan (Plan) is population projections provided by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) for 2025. This data is further refined by Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT) to allocate expected population between unincorporated Snohomish County, Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) and incorporated areas. The county and SCT expect to adopt population projections through 2035 in the second quarter of 2013 but this information is not yet available.

The current population for unincorporated Snohomish County, provided by OFM in 2011, is 304,435. This figure is 3.1% lower than projections for this period and reflect the state-wide reduction in growth seen in recent years (SCT, Nov. 2011). The overall Snohomish County population projection for 2025 by OFM is 909,453. This figure includes a 4,900 Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) population reserve, which is unallocated to a specific location and, therefore, not necessarily planned to be located in unincorporated Snohomish County. That portion of the projected 909,453 population which is expected to be located in Snohomish County's jurisdiction totals 484,352. This number is reduced from previous projections over the same time frame as the county's allocation of growth has been reduced from 15% to 10% through joint planning efforts with Snohomish County cities, via SCT. Of the population planned to be located within Snohomish County's jurisdiction, 339,717 individuals are planned to be located in unincorporated UGAs and 144,634 are planned to be located in unincorporated Snohomish County. Overall, this equates to an increase of 183,891 individuals over the next 14 years. This planning horizon exceeds the planning timeline for this document; two more Park Plans are anticipated during this time which will address Snohomish County Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) progression toward serving this population.

Further modifications of population planning figures may occur as cities incorporate UGAs. Over the last several years, the cities of Marysville and Lake Stevens have both expanded their boundaries and assumed population groups that previously had been allocated to the county. Further efforts by other cities have been discussed and a vote was held in 2011 and in 2012 to approve expansion of the Bothell area boundaries. However, these votes failed and city boundaries are unchanged at this time. Because city boundary expansions are uncertain, transfer of population to cities from the county have not been assumed in this document.

In addition to increased population, changing population demographics are of interest in park planning so that facilities can be provided to meet the needs of county residents. Of particular interest is the trend in age demographics, which indicate that the Snohomish County population is increasing in senior proportion and the proportion of children under age 18 is decreasing. This trend has been emerging since the 1970s and projections to 2025, estimate that 24.8% of Snohomish County population will be sixty or older at that time (Snohomish County Area Agency on Aging, 2011). This figure applies to Snohomish County as a whole, incorporated and unincorporated areas. Age demographics from 1970, 1990 and 2010 census data are shown below.

	0-17/19*	18/20*-24	25-44	45-64	65+
1970	41%*	7.4%*	26.2%	18%	7.4%
1990	27.7%	8.8%	36.6%	17.4%	9.5%
2010	24.4%	8.8%	28.6%	27.9%	10.3%

\*1970 age groupings were 0-19 and 20-24

Note that the percentage of youth reported under 18 in 1970 is elevated, as census figures for that year included individuals through age 19. The next reporting group (18-24) is lower for the same year as calculations for the figure started at age 20, not 18 in 1970.

In addition to expecting an aging population, statistics also show a trend in increased obesity in Snohomish County. As reported by the Snohomish Health District, the proportion of obese adults in Snohomish County increased from 13% in 1993 to 24% in 2004 (Snohomish Health District, 2007) and increased again in 2009 to 28.8% (Snohomish Health District, 2010).

Another health trend of concern is the amount of physical activity youth and adults engage in in any given week. At the low end of physical activity tracking, an average of 34.3% of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported participating in moderate physical activity for 30 minutes, five days a week in 2008 (Snohomish Health District, 2011). Adults reported slightly higher adherence to this standard at 39.4% (Snohomish Health District, 2007). The new physical activity guideline used for children currently is one hour of activity, that causes increased heart rate, every day. Within Snohomish County, an average of 22.9% of surveyed 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> graders met this standard (Snohomish Health District, 2011). While this number is up from previous sampling in 2008, it means that less than 1 in 4 youth are meeting this standard for healthy activity levels.

In the Snohomish Health District report “How Big are We?” (Snohomish Health District, 2007), six goals are presented to aid in prevention of obesity. Three of the goals are related to nutrition and three are related to physical activity. Of the three physical activity goals, all can, in some way be addressed through the provision of parks. The physical activity goals are:

1. Increase the physical activity opportunities available to youth.
2. Increase the number of people who have access to free or low-cost recreational activities.
3. Increase the number of community environments that are conducive to physical activity.

Along the same lines, the new recommended Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) level-of-service (LOS) indicators put special emphasis on access to park facilities by the public and percentage of the population that participates in active outdoor activities (Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, 2008). This is a shift from the traditional ‘acres per population’ approach to level-of-service, which has been common for many years. As the role of parks in contributing to healthy communities continues to be better understood, it makes sense that new emphasis is placed on accessibility of the park, as opposed to just size.

## **B. The Benefits of Parks**

The benefits of parks to contribute to quality of life go beyond the role described above to help address obesity problems. Parks also offer opportunities for social interaction, access to fresh air and sunshine, stress and depression reduction, alternative transportation options, habitat protection for plants and animals, natural stormwater attenuation and many others. A report of the many different ways that parks benefit our community is included in Appendix D.

## **C. Park Level-of-Service**

The Snohomish County Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) sets the level-of-service for county provided and maintained facilities. The CFP was last updated in 2005 and prescribes a target and minimum level-of-service for Community Parks, while also identifying other priority park improvements. Community Parks are specifically called out with a target and minimum level-of-service, because this classification is identified in the CFP as ‘necessary to support development’ and impact mitigation fees are collected for this classification of parks. Tracking of progress in meeting the level-of-service for Community Parks is analyzed and reported annually in the Snohomish County Statement of Assessment, which is completed as part of the annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The other projects identified in the CFP were derived from the 2001 Snohomish County Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan and will be updated during the 2015 CFP update.

The Community Park level-of-service basis for collecting park impact mitigation fees is identified in this Plan to be reviewed, starting in 2013. The purpose of this review is to evaluate the current park impact fee methodology against larger park provision goals identified in this Plan. In addition, in January of 2011, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) included in their Planning Policies and Guidelines Manual (Washington State Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, 2011) a recommended level-of-service methodology, which needs to be evaluated to determine if it is applicable and useful for Snohomish County park planning. The use of the RCO level-of-service methodology is not a requirement of obtaining grants from the RCO, but the intent for a state-wide, consistent level-of-service methodology is to help “measure the effectiveness of the state’s investment in outdoor recreation” (Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, 2008). Incorporating all, or portions, of this methodology assists in

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evaluating Snohomish County's contribution to providing park facilities alongside other providers in the state.

The current level-of-service (LOS) adopted for Community Parks is:

Parks Category	Target LOS	Minimum LOS
Community – Land	1 park per 15,000 additional residents	One additional Community park (land) per 21,000 additional residents
Community – Facilities	1 Community Facility for every 25,000 people	One new fully developed Community (facility) for every 28,500 in population

Parks current level-of-service, based on estimated 2012 population figures is:

Parks Category	2012 Estimated LOS
Community – Land	1 park per 4,326 additional residents
Community – Facilities	1 Community Facility for every 19,772 people

According to these figures, Parks is currently meeting the defined level-of-service for Community Parks and there are no deficiencies in provision of these facilities.

Current population planning utilizes a 2025 population forecast, which will be updated to a 2035 estimate in the 2015 Snohomish County GMA Comprehensive Plan update. The 2025 population target for Snohomish County is 909,453 (484,352 additional residents). In order to meet the level-of-service for Community Parks land for this future population, between six and nine additional Community Park properties need to be acquired. In order to meet the level-of-service for Community Parks facilities, two or three more sites need to be fully developed.

In addition to the level-of-service for Community Parks described in the CFP, these additional targets are also included:

- Land establishment and maintenance of 2 public-access waterfront park sites
- Acquisition of 450 acres of resource conservancy land

- Land for 2 new single-use (special use) activity sites
- 18 miles of Centennial Trail development, 10 miles of Whitehorse Trail development, including three trailheads
- Two new non-motorized water access sites on the Snohomish River, designation of a water trail in Snohomish River
- Snohomish River Estuary restoration – river/stream restoration
- Stillaguamish River, river/stream habitat restoration
- Two new off-leash dog areas
- Two new skateboard parks
- One new outdoor shooting range
- Partnership development of tournament athletic facility
- New overnight camping facilities at two parks

These targets were derived from the 2001 Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan and reflect the priorities for development that were determined through the planning process at that time. As targets, these projects were envisioned to occur, but changes in priorities since that time and more recent planning efforts have shifted priorities. Regardless, many of these projects have been completed, or partially completed:

- Acquisition of 670 resource conservation acres (Smith Island, addition to Paradise Valley Conservation Area, Cathcart and Heybrook Ridge)
- Acquisition of one special use facility property (future shooting range)
- Acquisition of 58.63 additional acres for the Centennial Trail
- Development of 17.9 additional miles of the Centennial Trail, with seven new trailheads
- Opening of seven miles of the Whitehorse Trail
- Restoration at Spencer Island
- Three new off-leash dog areas
- One new skateboard park
- Acquisition of property for a tournament athletic facility
- New overnight camping at Flowing Lake and River Meadows parks

Because this list of projects in the CFP was included as a target, without a minimum level of completion identified, completion is not required and no deficiencies were created by not completing them.

### **D. Recreation Demand**

The RCO periodically publishes a statewide outdoor recreation survey. The latest survey was released in 2006 and included rates of participation in various outdoor activities as well as activities in which respondents would like to spend more time participating (Clearwater

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Research, Inc., 2006). The groupings that RCO based input on are different than the groupings used in the Snohomish County recreation survey (described later), but some general trends can be identified. The RCO findings are as follows:

Ranking of Major Activity Areas by Average Month Participation	
Walking/Hiking	73.8%
Team/Individual Sports, Physical Activity	69.2%
Nature Activity	53.9%
Picnicking	46.8%
Indoor Community Facility Activity	45.1%
Water Activity	36.0%
Sightseeing	35.4%
Bicycle Riding	30.9%
Off-road Vehicle Riding	17.9%
Snow/Ice Activity	17.5%
Camping	17.1%
Fishing	15.2%
Hunting/Shooting	7.3%
Equestrian Activity	4.3%
Air Activity	4.0%

In addition to this information, the RCO report also noted that:

*“The most frequently mentioned activities that Washingtonians wanted to do more of in the 12 months following the survey interview included sightseeing (46.9%), picnicking or cooking outdoors (39.4%), hiking (33.5%), tent camping with a car or motorcycle (33.4%), and swimming or wading at a beach (28.4%).”*

In Snohomish County, a similar survey was utilized to gain area specific feedback from county residents about the types of facilities they most strongly desired for recreational use. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to a total of approximately 20,000 residents, located in both incorporated and unincorporated areas. Of the invitations to participate in the survey that were distributed, 408 individuals submitted responses. Respondents were directed to an online survey through SurveyMonkey™ or also had the option of requesting a paper copy of the survey.

In order to maintain consistency and monitor trends, the survey was based upon a format used in previous years. An attempt was made to ensure that the survey questions were unbiased, easy to understand and did not skew responses. The survey included questions on demographics, preferred recreation categories, levels of satisfaction for park services and funding opportunities. The final question was open-ended and allowed people to record general comments about the park system.

The survey sample was randomly chosen from the Snohomish County population. Invitations were mailed to the selectees with instructions on how to access the survey and an access code, used to ensure duplicate responses were not recorded and also to provide general information about the location where the respondent lived. The code identified if the response was from within unincorporated Snohomish County, within a UGA and the zip code of the mailing location. After logging into SurveyMonkey™, participants were led through a series of eighteen questions before ending on the open-ended input option.

### Survey Results

Survey participants were asked to indicate where they felt Snohomish County Parks should focus its resources. Participants were prompted to select from the following broad choices:

- **Water access**, such as motor boating, kayaking, beach access, fishing and swimming pools
- **Trails**, such as hiking, walking and horseback riding
- **Sports facilities**, such as baseball and soccer fields
- **Conservation and wildlife areas**, such as viewing locations, interpretive trails and protected areas
- **Leisure**, such as picnic areas, camping and viewpoints
- **Special use facilities**, such as golf courses, fairgrounds and civic centers

Respondents rated these categories as follows (1 being the highest ranking, 6 being the lowest):

Recreation Category	Average Ranking
Trails	2.26
Leisure	2.87
Water access	2.99

Conservation and wildlife areas	3.15
Sports facilities	4.25
Special use facilities	4.69

It is not a surprise that ‘trails’ and ‘water access’ ranked as high as they did – this follows state and national trends for preferred recreation activities. What is surprising, however, is that ‘leisure’ was ranked second highest among the options. This ranking may reflect the slowed economy and the leisure category of activities (picnicking, camping, etc.) may be seen as low-cost ways to get out and/or spend time with family. Within the leisure category, preference was shown for picnic areas (22.9%), camping (19.7%), playgrounds (17.3%) and off-leash areas (16.8%). Community centers, viewpoints and convenience camping did not rank well within this category.

Following the ranking of recreation categories, respondents were asked to identify their highest priority of activities within each category, provide feedback on their satisfaction with Snohomish County Park services and respond to two funding questions. The full results of this survey are included in Appendix C.

### Public Meetings

Additional input was collected through five public meetings held at various locations around Snohomish County. The meetings were intended to ascertain what the public valued about parks and get specific comments about areas of focus. The following is a summary of key comments collected at these meetings:

#### Evergreen State Fairgrounds – Aug. 15, 2011

- Group identified equestrian activities, hiking (including wheelchair experiences) and water activities (beach swimming, kayaking and beach combing) as important. Mention of off-road vehicle (ORV) riding also made.
- Strong interest in additional equestrian opportunities.
- Group favored natural, wildlife type parks – especially with equestrian access.
- Interest in Sky Valley Recreation Corridor improvements.

#### Arlington – Aug. 23, 2011

- Group identified equestrian, hiking and water activities as important. There was also an emphasis on nature enjoyment and preservation.
- Strong interest expressed in additional equestrian opportunities - in particular, development of Whitehorse trail and trailhead improvement in general.
- Group also expressed interest in camping and picnicking opportunities.

Willis D. Tucker Park – Sept. 8, 2011

- This group identified large-scale national type parks as being of particular value, but identified more urban-type improvements as desired improvements by the Parks Department including lit trails and connected parks.

Evergreen State Fairgrounds – May 1, 2012

- Group was very interested in shooting range in Sultan area.
- Group was interested in equestrian facilities, including access to new West Lake Roesiger site and Whitehorse Trail.

Snohomish County Administration Building – June 7, 2012

- Participants identified specific value of parks in urban areas – access to open space is important.
  - Interest expressed in more soccer fields in central and northern county.
  - Would like better, and more frequent information about Park activities and happenings.
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### III. Park and Recreation Need

#### A. Park and Recreation Service Area

Lying along the northeasterly edge of Puget Sound and covering more than 2,000 square miles, Snohomish County contains some of the most scenic and diverse natural areas in the Pacific Northwest. Snohomish County ranges from the crest of the Cascade Mountains on its eastern border, to Puget Sound and its associated lowlands to the west. Snohomish County is bordered by Skagit County to the north and King County to the south. Many of the natural areas contained within Snohomish County have been recognized for their unique and special environmental qualities and have been set aside, or acquired, by federal, state, and local agencies, as parks or restrictive preserves. Over the last 49 years, Snohomish County Parks has invested resources to make sure that many of these exceptional lands are protected and made available to the people of the county.

Within Snohomish County, there are a total of 20 cities/towns ranging in size from the City of Everett in western Snohomish County (population 101,081 - 2010 census) to the Town of Index located toward the county's eastern boundary (population 178 - 2010 census). Population within the county is weighted toward incorporated areas, with an estimated 412,565 residents living in incorporated areas as compared to 304,435 estimated to be residing in unincorporated areas, according to the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) April 2011 data release. Within this population the age distribution (based on 2010 census) is as follows:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percent of Total Population</b>
< 18 years	24.4%
18 – 24 years	8.8%
25 – 44 years	28.6%
45 – 64 years	27.9%
>65 years	10.3%
Total:	100%

These figures represent an on-going trend since the 1970s of an increasing proportion of population over the age of 65 and a decreasing proportion less than 18 years.

## **B. Inventory**

### **Park Inventory**

A complete listing of parks managed by the Snohomish County Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) is included in Appendix A of this document. A summary spreadsheet lists each alphabetically and includes information on classification, size and general amenities. A description of each of the classifications follows and includes information about the intended service area for each classification. Further information on each Snohomish County park property is found on individual park maps (also in Appendix A) following the summary listing, as well as an overview map showing the distribution of facilities.

An additional overview map for the county is also included in Appendix A, locating facilities provided by other jurisdictions. This includes city and state parks, Washington State Department of Natural Resource (DNR) and United States Forest Service holdings. This information is provided to show the total availability of recreation opportunities in Snohomish County.

### **Park Classifications**

Parks utilizes a park classification scheme, which is based on several factors, including park location, size, access and service area. Providing a classification system for Snohomish County park lands is not a requirement of the Growth Management Act (GMA) nor the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), but it does help Parks group parklands according to their use and management. The categories Snohomish County Parks uses are as follows:

- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- Regional Parks
- Open Space/Preserve
- Special Use
- Trails

These classification descriptions have been refined as a part of this update process in order to provide clearer definitions of the groups.

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This refinement has triggered some parks to change classification, or classifications of some parks may have changed because the factors used to define the groups are based on factors which can change over time (such as Urban Growth Area (UGA) boundary changes). Similarly, some currently undeveloped park classifications may have changed since the last plan, based on a revised vision of what those properties may be used for.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**

Neighborhood Parks are generally small facilities that are located within residential areas or UGAs and are typically accessible by foot. These parks provide open space for nearby residents and are often a focal point for the neighborhood. Recreational activities in Neighborhood Parks are variable and may include multiple features, or the park may be limited to a single feature, such as playground or soft surface trail. In some instances, Neighborhood Parks may not provide for public access, and primarily provide open space, but because of their location in developed areas, they serve a neighborhood function.

The county encourages and promotes the transfer of Neighborhood Parks in incorporated and urban growth areas to the cities within whose boundaries, or potential annexation area, they are located.

Neighborhood Parks are typically smaller and the current average size of a Neighborhood Parks is 2.6 acres. This reduced size of Neighborhood Parks often limit the number of amenities offered at these facilities and they typically offer fewer amenities than Community Parks. Because Neighborhood Parks are located in residential areas, access, if provided, is predominately by foot and limited parking is offered. A generally defined service area for Neighborhood Parks is ¼ mile.

Examples of Neighborhood Parks include: Fircrest and Locust Way Parks.

### **COMMUNITY PARKS**

Community Parks provide the setting for community activities and provide recreational opportunities for both children and adults. Recreational features in Community Parks are typically a mix of types and are selected based on community input and on an effort to provide both passive and active recreational opportunities. Typical park amenities include picnic tables, benches, shelters, open play, playgrounds, trails, ballfields and sport courts.

Community Parks are typically located in incorporated areas, UGAs, or in areas expected to become UGAs at some point. The average size of a Community Park is 26 acres, but in certain instances, a Community Park may be smaller if it is used as a community gathering space, or if it provides waterfront access. Because Community Parks are typically located in more urban areas, access to the park may be via foot, car or public transportation. Community Parks are generally considered to serve residents residing within a 5-mile radius.

Examples of Community Parks include: Silver Creek Park, Lake Stevens Community Park and Tambark Creek Park.

### **REGIONAL PARKS**

Regional parks are typically identified by unique features or amenities that attract users from a wide area. Regional parks provide the opportunity for individuals to get out and enjoy a longer duration park visit often offer the opportunity to learn about the fantastic natural features of Snohomish County. These parks may be located anywhere in the county and typically include a feature such as a boat launch, water access, camping or equestrian facilities. These parks offer destination recreation and the amenities provided are sometimes fee-based (e.g. camping, boat launches, etc.). The size of a Regional Park and its primary route of access are inconsequential to this classification, as it is the features and service area which predominantly define this classification. Because of this definition, Regional Parks are considered to serve residents from all over the county.

Examples of Snohomish County Regional Parks include: Kayak Point Regional Park (park features saltwater access, motorized boat launch and camping) and Lord Hill Regional Park (features numerous equestrian trails).

### **OPEN SPACE/PRESERVE**

Open Space/Preserve parks focus on preserving wilderness, special natural areas or wildlife habitat, and/or unique qualities of open space. Preservation of open space has innumerable benefits to our community, including habitat values, carbon sequestration, and others described more fully in Appendix D. Such areas are often planned for preservation in their natural state and management plans for these sites are focused on protecting natural habitat values while providing access to the public, when appropriate. Access to Open Space/Preserve parks is

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determined on a case-by-case basis, but is provided whenever possible in order to provide contact with natural environments, promote the importance of open space, educate the public about habitat values and promote an appreciation for natural spaces. These parks remain essentially unimproved and development is limited to that which is appropriate to support the level of public access provided to the property.

Open Space/Preserve properties may be located anywhere in the county (incorporated or unincorporated) and amenities, if any, typically affect a small portion of the property. Access to Open Space/Preserve properties will vary upon location and may be via foot, if located near development, or via car if located more remotely. A service area for Open Space/Preserve properties is not commonly defined, but benefits of these properties typically include provision of habitat functions, open space preservation, air quality improvement, stormwater infiltration, flood attenuation in some cases, as well as other benefits.

Examples of Open Space/Preserve properties include: the Snohomish River Estuary and Southwest County Park.

### **SPECIAL USE**

Special Use parks typically have one dominant, specialized amenity that users are willing to travel for. These parks most commonly serve that portion of the population which is interested in the amenity the facility offers. However, these types of facilities also often have potential for revenue generation, which can be used to support the larger park system. Snohomish County currently has four Special Use facilities. These are the Evergreen State Fairgrounds, Kayak Point Golf Course, the Darrington Archery Range and a recently reconveyed property outside Sultan, which was acquired for the purpose of developing a shooting range.

Special Use facilities may be located anywhere in the county and access to these sites is variable, depending on location. Size also is variable and needs to be of sufficient size to support the provided amenity. A service area is not defined for these types of facilities.

### **TRAILS**

The Trails classification applies to 'linear parks' that provide a regional, or local system of trails for walkers, bicyclists, equestrians and hikers. Trails offer immense recreation opportunities and encourage active

lifestyles and alternative transportation use. Trails are also immensely popular and are the top feature requested by park users, both on the state and county level. Trails often compliment or provide opportunities to interconnect with existing or proposed federal, state and local community trail systems or destinations. Trails often provide staging areas, rest/picnic areas, trailheads and interpretive stations.

Parks in the Trails classification may be located anywhere in the county, but to be included in this classification, these facilities should extend at least one mile and have a preferable minimum width of 12 feet. The service area for Trail facilities is considered to be countywide as users often travel some distance to use them.

Snohomish County currently has three 'linear parks' that are included in the Trails classification. These are the Centennial Trail, the Whitehorse Trail and the Interurban Trail.

### Classification Changes

The classification system described above is provided as a management tool and classifications of individual parks may change due to a variety of factors. Some reasons that a park classification may change include:

- Change in use of the facility – For example, the facility may draw users from a wider or narrower distance than originally intended, or access may be provided to a facility that was historically used for open space provision only.
- Change in planned use of the facility – A particular facility may have previously been envisioned for a planned use, which then changed due to shifting priorities, new opportunities, or needs that the facility is identified to address.
- Incorporation of the facility into urban areas – As city limits and UGAs expand, growth may encompass a park that had previously been located in a more rural area.

### C. Park Programs

The Parks Department supports multiple programs at its facilities, primarily through agreements with other recreation providers. In 2011, summer camps were provided at Willis D. Tucker Park through an agreement with the YMCA. Individual classes for Zumba, Yoga, martial arts and art classes were also offered at the park through contracted

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vendors. Parks allows special events at park facilities through facility use agreements with outside organizations. In 2011, cross country events, orienteering competitions, long distance races, a weekly farmer's market, and 'Movies in the Park' were only some of the events offered. Other long-term, standing agreements exist with Washington State University (WSU) Extension, which has offices at McCollum Park and was at one time a part of the Parks Department. WSU Extension provides multiple educational opportunities for Snohomish County residents ranging from Master Gardeners to Beach Watchers to resources on canning. WSU Extension also provides the 4-H program, which uses the Evergreen State Fairgrounds extensively for meetings, training sessions and showing during the annual fair.

The Evergreen State Fairgrounds is another park site which provides extensive programs throughout the year. Totalling approximately 193 acres, the fairgrounds include a wide variety of buildings which provide the setting for approximately 850 events per year. Spaces at the fairgrounds include an event center, commercial building, racetrack, equestrian arena, animal barns, meeting rooms and grandstand. The diversity of facilities and amount of space available allow great diversity in the events that can occur at this facility.

Parks staff are utilized for swim programs at McCollum Pool and for a recently established specialized recreation program. McCollum Pool is one of the few outdoor pools in the area and is typically open from June until September each year. Parks staff offer swimming lessons at the facility, open swim sessions and the pool is available for private rental during the summer. The specialized recreation program was started in 2009 and was established to provide recreation opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. This program is supported by an annual distribution from Snohomish County Council and fills a much needed gap in recreational services within the county.

Many of Parks' ranger staff have experience in resource management and environmental education. The ranger staff averages over nineteen years working for the Parks Department and have intimate knowledge of Parks' properties. The ranger staff offer front-line contact for park visitors and are able to share their knowledge about park properties to the public. Parks has offered organized Ranger programs in the past, but as staffing levels have dropped, these programs have been available less frequently. Parks does partner, however, with other agencies to provide on-site educational experiences and this last year, the Marine

Resources Committee, Beach Watchers and Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force (currently Sound Salmon Solutions) provided programs to the public at Snohomish County Parks.

The county has supported a regional environmental educational learning center through its partnership with the Adopt-A-Stream Foundation to develop and operate the Northwest Stream Center at McCollum Park. This is a regional environmental education and interpretive facility focused on stream and wetland ecology and fish and wildlife habitat restoration. Additional opportunities for regional educational facilities, observation points, and study areas, should be explored through public and private partnerships at regional resource parks such as Spencer Island, Thomas' Eddy, Robe Canyon, Paradise Valley Conservation Area, Kayak Point and other significant natural resource areas.

Lastly, the Parks Department works to make available internship and volunteer opportunities through the Department. These opportunities provide individuals a chance to participate with park sites on a one-on-one basis and pursue projects of specific interest to them.

### **D. Parks Condition and Capacity**

#### **Types of Facilities**

Parks currently manages approximately 10,400 acres of parkland, which provide a wide diversity of recreation opportunities. The following park descriptions highlight specific developed and undeveloped parks within the Snohomish County Parks system and demonstrate the diverse types of recreation opportunities provided by Snohomish County Parks.

**TRAILS** – The Parks Department is extremely proud of its multiuse regional trail system and the many trails within its parks that provide miles of walking, bicycling and equestrian access.

Snohomish County developed and opened the first section of the Centennial Trail in 1993 and is in the process of completing the last section to complete the trail alignment from the City of Snohomish to the Skagit County line. When finished, this will provide a total of 29 available miles within this trail. This non-motorized, 'linear park' set the standard for multiuse trails in Snohomish County and consists of an accessible 12-foot wide paved pedestrian/bicycle trail with a parallel, separated 6-foot wide equestrian trail. Approximately 400,000 users

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enjoy the Snohomish County Centennial Trail annually. The trail has proven to provide a safe recreation environment for families, users of all ages, and people with disabilities.

Snohomish County has continued its efforts to develop regional trails through the creation of the Snohomish County Interurban Trail, a paved multipurpose trail stretching from the City of Everett south into King County. The Interurban Trail was developed thanks to the efforts of the Snohomish County Department of Public Works, the Cities of Everett, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood. Funding was provided through the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) transportation enhancement program.

Other multipurpose trails provided by Parks include the trails at Lord Hill Regional Park, Paradise Valley Conservation Area, and the Whitehorse Trail, which serve equestrians, mountain bikers, and hikers. The trails at Lord Hill Regional Park are natural surface, of varied topography and generally are six to eight feet in width. The Paradise Valley Conservation Area is a beautiful 793-acre property acquired to protect the headwaters of Little Bear Creek. A management plan has been completed and the site provides hiking, biking (including skills course) and limited equestrian access, while protecting the natural resources of the park. Further expansion of this facility is planned which will enhance equestrian use in particular. The Whitehorse Trail is an abandoned railroad right-of-way, which extends 27 miles from the City of Arlington to the Town of Darrington. Currently, seven miles of this unpaved trail are available for use by walkers, bicyclists and equestrians near the Town of Darrington. Development of additional sections of the trail is planned and will eventually provide access to one of the most scenic rural landscapes in the county. With the addition of two former farm sites (Trafton Trailhead and Cicero Pond) along its route, this trail will provide convenient access to several river fishing locations and viewpoints.

Snohomish County Parks also provides trails that are designed to provide access to natural areas. Nature trails provide the opportunity to view wildlife, interpret environmental, cultural or historic conditions and experience a unique recreational opportunity. At North Creek Regional Park, the nature trail consists of a floating boardwalk that provides access and interpretive information on the wetland that it crosses. The boardwalk offers a unique opportunity to enter into the wetland and view the plants and wildlife that live there. At Spencer

Island, access is provided via dike top trails, which provide visitors an excellent perspective to observe wildlife. Spencer Island is located in the Snohomish River Estuary and offers the opportunity to view a restored estuarine wetland. McCollum Park offers paved and natural surface trails that provide access through the North Creek riparian corridor. Inside the park, the Adopt-a-Stream Foundation has developed the Northwest Stream Center, which offers training on stream and wetland ecology.

East of the City of Granite Falls, just off the Mountain Loop Highway and along the South Fork of the Stillaguamish River, is the 938-acre Robe Canyon Historic Park. Initial property acquisition for this site began in 1995 and was completed in 1997. The site's primary claim to fame was as the travel corridor of the famous Monte Cristo Railroad that served the mining and logging interests of the area several decades ago. In more recent times, the canyon has been the frequent location of many volunteer trail clearing and service project activities. As a result of this recent work, a second trailhead has been added to this park, resulting in two very different hiking trail opportunities. Visitors may access the trail off Hwy 530 and venture along the old railroad route, or park at the Lime Kiln trailhead and follow the new trail, visiting a historic lime kiln.

Southwest County Park, located along Olympic View Drive in Edmonds, is a 120-acre property that has become an island of forest surrounded by development. This heavily wooded site, though previously logged some forty years ago, contains a variety of mixed-forest trees and plants, along with several pockets of wetlands, some modest hilly topographical relief and the stream corridor of Perrinville Creek. The site is completely surrounded by residential development and an active roadway bisects a portion of the parkland. The natural features of the site interior are accessed by a series of informal foot trails.

**SALTWATER ACCESS** – There is an incredible variety of natural, beautiful elements along the hundreds of miles of Puget Sound shoreline and Snohomish County contains many of these dramatic features. Within the Parks' custodial inventory can be found two accretion beaches - one at Meadowdale Beach Park and the other, just a mile north at Picnic Point Park, both in the southwest region of the county. These fan-shaped beaches are constantly being replenished with sand and gravel material deposited by streams flowing through steep-sided, eroding gulches and uplands. The beach area at both of these parks is accessed

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by crossing the Burlington Northern railroad, via overpass at Picnic Point Park and via underpass at Meadowdale Beach Park.

In the northwestern portion of the county, Kayak Point Regional Park provides access to Port Susan. The park's shoreline features nearly two-thirds of a mile of high quality beach and over 1,500 lineal feet of high bluff.

Kayak Point Regional Park was acquired in 1972 and totals 420 acres (another 270 acres is associated with Kayak Golf Course, which is classified as a Special Use facility). The park is located on Port Susan and features 3,300 feet of shoreline. This park offers water access, a boat launch, fishing pier, playground, rental cottage, yurts and tent and RV camping. The park was originally developed in the late 1970s and is immensely popular, both for day and overnight use. In 2011, the park was closed to additional entrants six times (even with the marginal weather that year), as the park had reached capacity and the campsites were booked an average of 24.85% of the year. Given that the average booking for our area is typically 14% - 19%, the high overnight use reflects the immense popularity of the site. Due to the age of this facility and popularity, it is a priority for Parks to evaluate and plan for renovation needs.

All three parks are extremely popular access points to Puget Sound and offer beachcombing and water enjoyment opportunities.

**RIVER AND STREAM ACCESS** – Along the major river corridors within Snohomish County several sites have been acquired by Parks. On the Stillaguamish River, the 55-acre Twin Rivers Park has an extensive riparian woodland and cobble-bar area (at the confluence of the North and South forks of the river) that are popular for river access and fishing. This site also includes a collection of soccer and baseball fields that are heavily used. This park is operated and maintained by the City of Arlington. The city and a newly formed non-profit organization built and operate a new disc golf course at this park. Nearby, just west of Arlington, is the 157-acre Portage Creek Wildlife Area. In addition to the creek flowing through the property, several acres of wetland meadows, a large pond and wildlife habitat area are featured. The site is utilized primarily as an outdoor laboratory and regularly receives groups of school children on environmental study tours. At the more recently acquired Trafton Trailhead, some three-and-a-half miles

upstream to the east, river access to the North Fork of the Stillaguamish is available.

Located on Hwy 530, just west of Darrington is Squire Creek Park. Just 30 acres in size, the site boasts one of the oldest Douglas fir and western hemlock tree stands in the Park system, and is also one of its best camping locations. Additionally, Squire Creek itself is home to notable salmon spawning and bald eagle activity.

Along the South Fork of the Stillaguamish River is River Meadows Regional Park, which exhibits scenic and river access opportunities. This 152-acre park features nearly a mile of mixed-forest and wooded shoreline, expansive floodplain meadows, and forested upland areas and slopes, which support more passive activities such as picnicking and nature trail use. This site's history includes evidence of early Native American encampment and trading activity, and more recent pioneer settlement, logging and farming activity. Since coming under public ownership, the park has been hugely popular for river access, picnicking and camping and plays host to the Stillaguamish Tribes' annual Festival of the River. A yurt village has recently been built, offering for the first time convenience camping in this rich natural area.

Immediately east of the City of Everett and south of the City of Marysville, lies the vast river floodplain of the Snohomish River Estuary. Meandering channels and sloughs wind through this riparian zone, moving up and down with the seasonal river flows and tidal influences. Within this dynamic water-orientated landscape lie several islands of varying size and characteristics. Many of the natural features of these islands have experienced a historical transformation from the primitive forests and wetlands of the native peoples to agricultural and other uses introduced by European settlement.

In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, these island farm-related activities began to die out, in part due to economic trend influences, but more likely due to increasingly frequent river flooding. In a program of acquisitions to return these river floodplain lands to their former tidally influenced habitat state, the Parks Department purchased approximately 1,400 acres of these lands which include:

- Portions of North and South Spencer Island
  - The northern portion of Ebey Island
  - The entirety of Otter Island
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- Several nearby islands and shorelines
- 384 acres of Smith Island

Man-made dikes on one of the larger parcels, Spencer Island, have been breached to allow the tidally influenced waters to flow through the inner island areas and to re-establish saltwater marshes, fish habitat and waterfowl resting and feeding areas.

Upriver, just west of the City of Snohomish, is a 65-acre site along the Lowell-Snohomish Road called Field's Riffle. This county property is comprised of a long, north-facing shoreline frequented by salmon and steelhead fishermen, and a lagoon which provides excellent bird and wildlife habitat.

Four miles further upriver is the county's Bob Heirman Wildlife Park at Thomas' Eddy. This 430-acre site, also a reclaimed farm property, is what has been described as "the best river fishing spot in the county." The park site is essentially a wetland situated at the edge of a vast floodplain and gravel bar. It has over a mile of meandering shoreline, thick with willows, cottonwood, and dense riparian vegetation. Open field areas are frequently inundated with seasonal floods and the small ponds and spring-fed lakes are permanent features. These ponds now are active wildlife destinations and Shadow Lake is the most heavily used night roost location for Trumpeter Swans in the county. On the upland overlook, near the park's public entry and parking, are vast territorial views across the river to the north, and also east, looking toward Lord Hill Regional Park.

**LAKE ACCESS** – Snohomish County residents are fortunate to enjoy the benefits of many lakes scattered throughout the county. These lakes offer opportunities for swimming, boating and general water enjoyment.

Gissberg Twin Lakes Park, west of Marysville, originated from the excavation of gravel for the construction of nearby Interstate 5. The county acquired the site in 1973, and the two adjoining lakes have evolved into a popular 54-acre park. The park features two swimming beaches, walking paths and picnic areas. The natural spring-fed lakes are stocked with bass and rainbow trout. The lakes can be fished year-round and are a popular destination for local fishing enthusiasts. The northern lake has been designated for youth (14 years old and younger) only.

Lake Goodwin Park was opened for public use in 2006. This 14-acre park is located on the north end of Lake Goodwin and immediately became a community favorite. The park features a play area, creek restoration, shallow wading beach and dock. This beautiful park is ideal for family friendly water access.

Wenberg Park is a recent addition to the Snohomish County Parks inventory and was transferred from Washington State Parks in 2009. The park is located on the eastern shore of Lake Goodwin and provides day-use access to the lake, as well as a boat launch, picnic areas and camping. The park is approximately 45 acres in size and is a favorite summer hang out.

In the southwest urban region, Martha Lake Park is located on 164<sup>th</sup> St. SE between the cities of Lynnwood and Mill Creek. Formerly a tavern and resort property, this six-acre urban site has been redesigned to provide much-needed public access to the lake and includes a swim area and fishing piers.

Flowing Lake Park is a 38-acre facility, located at the north end of Flowing Lake. The immensely popular park contains both day-use access to the lake, as well as camping, including four cabins which provide 'convenience camping.' This park features a swim area, boat launch, dock and picnic shelters.

Wyatt Park is located on the western shore of Lake Stevens overlooking the beautiful waters of the lake, as well as the picturesque snowcapped Cascade Mountains. The park provides a pier designated swimming area, boat launch and general water access.

In one of the more isolated and less known areas of the county, the 195-acre Lake Cassidy/Lake Martha Wetland, along the central section of the Centennial Trail corridor north of the City of Lake Stevens, is primarily a natural area preservation purchase. Access to Lake Cassidy is possible via a new dock system located along the Centennial Trail. Occupying the site's wooded edge of the northern shoreline of Lake Cassidy is an exceptional natural feature: a large, floating, sphagnum moss mat, which has created a special and sensitive plant habitat found in few places in the region.

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**FAIRGROUNDS** – The Evergreen State Fair and Fairgrounds have been a treasured public resource and gathering place for many generations. Land acquisition and development began at the current site, north of the City of Monroe, in 1912. Major building phases occurred in the 1970s and 1980s and resulted in approximately 54 buildings on the site. The site hosts the annual twelve-day fair and approximately 850 other different events during the year. These events range from a weekly swap meet to equestrian competitions, and antique car shows. These shows generate significant revenue, although the majority of facility income is derived from the twelve-day annual fair. Due to the size of this facility, convenient location on Hwy 2, and diversity of buildings, the site has been under consideration for opportunities to expand use.

Opportunities for use of this facility are significant and are discussed more fully in the ‘Redevelopment Initiative – Operations Committee Presentation’ which was developed in 2009 (Snohomish County Department of Parks & Recreation, 2009). This Redevelopment Initiative provides a vision as well as plan of action for the property which seeks to achieve:

1. Redevelopment, operation and maintenance in a fiscally and environmentally responsible and sustainable fashion;
2. Protection of current lines of business and key individual profit centers;
3. Showcasing and promotion of Snohomish County agricultures, commerce, technology and culture;
4. A focus on providing a first class venue for community, regional and national celebrations and events;
5. Development and marketing of the facility as a 186 acre (now 193 acre) destination recreation park; and
6. Partnerships with non-profit, corporate, government and community-based organizations for the creation of greater opportunities and long-term benefits.

The Redevelopment Initiative helped lead to the 2011 construction of a new, 33,600 square foot, multipurpose building.

Because of the diversity of this park, there is much public involvement in the property which includes the agricultural, equestrian, motor sports, youth education and historic preservation communities. The site currently also houses the Western Heritage Center and a Quarter Midget race track, through agreements with private entities.

**GOLF COURSES** - The Snohomish County Parks system includes one golf course at Kayak Point Regional Park. The golf course was developed in 1977 and is currently operated by a private company through agreement with the county. The golf course features eighteen holes and is considered to be a challenging course. The course is located east of Marine View Drive, on the opposite side of the road from the day-use/camping portion of the park. Because of the specialized use of the golf course area, the Kayak Point Park property is separated into two management classifications: Regional and Special Use.

**CAMPING** – Snohomish County Parks has some phenomenal campgrounds that tend to fly beneath the radar of commonly thought of camping destinations. Camping opportunities provided by Snohomish County are currently offered at Squire Creek (outside Darrington), River Meadows (east of Arlington), Wenberg (on Lake Goodwin), Kayak Point (on Puget Sound) and Flowing Lake (on Flowing Lake) Parks. These campgrounds are smaller than the typical Washington State Park campgrounds, but offer more amenities than Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or United States Forest Service sites. Some Snohomish County campgrounds also offer convenience camping – yurts or cabins that allow extension of the camping season, and/or the need to bring less gear than your typical tent camping trip.

Squire Creek Park was originally acquired in 1926 and was developed into a campground in 1971. The site offers tent and recreational vehicle camping in a beautiful old growth forest. The park is adjacent to Squire Creek and two large picnic shelters are located near the creek. The park is a perfect staging location for enjoying the nearby Mt. Baker – Snoqualmie National Forest. The site provides approximately thirty-four campsites.

Camping facilities at River Meadows Park include campsites and six yurts. The park is located on the South Fork of the Stillaguamish River and totals 145 acres in size. Camping sites are located in the open meadow and adjacent, forested, river buffer. Recreation opportunities at this site include fishing along the mile-long river bank, hiking on the meandering trails and wading in the river. This is a beautiful site and campers have many options for recreation while enjoying their stay.

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Wenberg Park is the largest campground of the Snohomish County Park system, offering a total of sixty-nine campsites, some with septic hook-ups and many offering power and water as well. The campsites at this park are located in closer proximity to other sites, compared to other Snohomish County campgrounds, but the park is extremely popular for camping and day use. Visitors enjoy access to Lake Goodwin from the swim beach, may use the boat launch or enjoy the various picnic areas. There are many amenities available at the park and in the surrounding area for campers to enjoy.

Kayak Point Regional Park and Flowing Lake Park both offer beautiful forested campsites with a number of amenities to enjoy during overnight visits. Kayak Point Park offers access to a 3,300-foot saltwater shoreline, fishing pier, boat launch, waterfront picnic shelters, playground and open field play area. Flowing Lake Park provides a boat launch, floating dock, swim area, playground, sand volleyball court, picnic shelter and picnicking areas.

**OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS** – A recent interest in off-leash dog parks has led to construction of three facilities, with another currently under construction. The three existing parks are located at Willis D. Tucker Park (two off-leash dog parks) and Cavalero Hill (one off-leash dog park). Both parks have separated areas within the dog parks – one is considered a ‘regular’ area and the other is differentiated as a ‘shy/senior’ area. Both portions are completely fenced and allow for canine running and play. These parks are extremely popular and are used year round. Plans for additional off-leash facilities have been considered and another facility is currently being constructed at Tambark Creek Park.

**BALLFIELDS** – A topic of considerable discussion in the 2007 Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan was the need for and provision of ballfields. At that time, there was perceived to be a shortage of facilities in the county and jurisdictions throughout the area, including Snohomish County, were working to provide additional ballfields. As a part of that effort, Snohomish County has provided new ballfields at Willis D. Tucker, Lake Stevens, and Martha Lake Airport Parks and will be installing additional facilities at Tambark Creek Park, Willis D. Tucker Park and Wellington Hills. In addition, efforts to refurbish fields at Esperance and Forsgren Parks were also completed since the last plan in order to increase playing opportunities.

**PLAYGROUNDS** – Snohomish County Parks has eighteen playgrounds of varying ages and size throughout the county. Almost all these playgrounds are well used, although the ones at Kayak Point and Willis D. Tucker Parks receive especially heavy use. The Kayak Point Park playground is a recent addition to the park and immediately became a favorite with the many park goers. The playground includes swings, climbing and pretend play options as well as a large space net. The popularity of this park and general appeal of the playground has ensured that this playground is well used. The Willis D. Tucker playground includes typical play elements but also includes Parks' only spray park. The spray park is heavily used during hot summer months (and even on some questionable weather days) and in 2009 was voted one of King 5 Television's top five playground destinations (King5 Best of Western Washington).

### Condition of Facilities

Many of the facilities in the Snohomish County Park system were developed over thirty years ago and have reached the point of needing renovation. Parks that fall into this category include: Kayak Point, Flowing Lake, Wenberg, the Evergreen State Fairgrounds, River Meadows, and Squire Creek. Interestingly, this list of aging parks also includes the entire list of camping facilities, which are a profit center for the department. Due to the age of these facilities, repairs at these parks are increasingly common and Parks' campgrounds do not always include the modern amenities campers are looking for (e.g. increased power, internet access, larger camp sites, etc.). Typical on-going repairs at aging facilities include water and power issues, asphalt cracking, and stormwater related concerns. Larger issues related to these older facilities also often include awkward Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) retrofits and lack of stormwater treatment. Renovations are needed at these facilities to replace aging infrastructure, to fully incorporate ADA accessibility and to address stormwater treatment and detention, all to support the goals of providing a quality visitor experience and of reducing operation costs and maintenance needs.

The age of the Evergreen State Fairgrounds presents a particular concern. Buildings at this facility (besides the Shanahan cabin, which dates to 1900) range in date of construction from 1948 to the recent addition of the Evergreen Event Center in 2011. Over half of the main structures were built before 1980, including significant buildings such as the Grandstands, Commercial Building and Indoor Arena. A Redevelopment Initiative was developed for the fairgrounds and

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identified building and facility challenges including “the lack of usable space of several buildings, the impacts of deferred maintenance on existing buildings, and the lack of capital funding resources to upgrade, replace and/or develop buildings and facilities” (Snohomish County Department of Parks & Recreation, 2009). The fairgrounds have existed in their current location for over sixty years and include approximately 54 buildings, seven of which were recommended for demolition in the Redevelopment Initiative. In 2011, three of these structures were demolished and replaced with a single, open span, multipurpose building, utilizing federal recovery zone economic development bonds which are planned to be paid back with revenue from rental of the facility. Construction of this new building has initiated efforts to reinvest in the fairgrounds, although funding for future, needed upgrades has not been identified at this time.

Another facility which presents unique problems due to its age is the pool at McCollum Park. McCollum Pool has been a popular amenity for the South Everett/Mill Creek community for over 40 years. McCollum Park is a beautiful natural setting for this outdoor pool and many citizens have passionate memories of the facility and feel a strong attachment to this venue. McCollum Pool has been maintained so the typical pool-user is not aware of many problems with the facility. However, the pool does show signs of deterioration and parts for the pool’s failing mechanical systems were assessed to have less than five year’s life remaining. Many users do notice the pool house is showing its age and that the pool liner/shell is facing eminent structural failure. Repairs to the pool are complicated due to the siting of the facility. Originally built on an old landfill, the area is continually settling, compromising the park and pool. Restrictions on how landfills can be used also complicate considerations of replacement of this facility.

The age of the Parks system also means that modern efficiencies in power fixtures and building components are not necessarily incorporated into the parks. For example, newer light fixtures can reduce power needs, as can on-demand water heaters and improved insulation and windows. Low-flow toilets and targeted irrigation systems can reduce water consumption. Piecemeal retrofits have been made at some parks as the opportunity has presented itself, but facility wide renovations are needed to incorporate efficiencies and reduce overall operating impacts, while reducing maintenance needs associated with maintaining older infrastructure.

In the interest of improving efficiencies, Parks has explored a naturalization program, which is intended to reduce maintenance inputs at park facilities and also to reduce environmental impacts associated with park operations. At Kayak Point Regional Park, for example, several edge areas exist which are not used by the public, but are currently mown. Some of these lawn areas could be replaced with shrubs or let grow long and be cut back only one or two times a year, instead of the weekly treatment that they currently receive. This change would reduce staff time required to maintain the park, reduce carbon emissions from maintenance equipment and increase space available for wildlife use, all with minimal impact to the park user. Implementation and expansion of this program will require a site-by-site analysis to identify areas suitable for inclusion in the program, as well as potential user impacts, in order to develop a plan for execution. The benefits of this type of effort are significant and should be pursued as staff becomes available to develop plans.

Parks tracks performance measures for ‘meeting service standards,’ ‘number of citizens visiting county parks,’ ‘number of new or enhanced amenities available to the public’ and ‘number of participants in recreation/education programs.’ These measurements are compiled and made available through Snohomish County’s SnoStat Performance Measure system and are reported on a monthly basis (Snohomish County). Of the four performance measures listed above, ‘meeting service standards’ directly relates to park facility condition. The benchmark/target set for this measurement is for 80% of park facilities to meet service standards. Service standards take into account, facility safety, cleanliness, attractiveness and if the facility is effectively maintained. In 2011, Parks’ facilities met the defined benchmark/target eleven out of twelve months in spite of the aging condition of many of Parks’ facilities.

### **Public Input on Park Conditions and Services**

Although the public was generally positive about the condition of Park facilities, as reflected in the public survey results, (66% either somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement that they were satisfied with the condition of Park facilities) there was a definite focus on prioritizing maintenance/use of existing facilities over developing new ones expressed in the open ended comments collected through the survey process and in public meetings. Some typical comments received were:

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“I think it is more important to maintain what we have than to develop new facilities”

“Take care of existing facilities before spending our tax money on new facilities...”

A significant number of comments were also made noting specific improvements that users sought at existing facilities. Requests for replacement restrooms on the Centennial Trail (instead of sani-cans) were common as were comments about the age of certain playgrounds. These types of upgrades are also a priority, in order to enhance and improve existing use, where appropriate and feasible.

One of the challenges associated with renovating park facilities is identifying funding for the work. The focus on development in recent years has meant that funding was targeted toward those efforts, and the reduction in available funding now means that dollars are not available to make improvements. Fees from park use (such as ballfield fees) could be used for maintenance of the parks and lifespan replacements, but funding is currently directed so that generated revenue goes back into the general fund. As an example, Parks is increasingly installing synthetic turf ballfields because they can handle increased play, require less inputs (water and fertilizer) and a higher price can be charged for field use. The cost of installing a lit, synthetic turf ballfield costs approximately \$1 million dollars and lasts approximately 10 years. At the end of that lifetime, replacement can cost approximately \$.5 million and funding is not designated to make the replacement. It could make sense for revenue generated from the field to be placed in an account and be allowed to accrue for replacement, when needed.

As a part of the development process for this Snohomish County Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan (Plan), an invitation to participate in a public survey was sent to approximately 20,000 Snohomish County residents (both in incorporated and unincorporated areas). In this survey, feedback was asked for in three specific areas related to public satisfaction with Parks’ facilities. The public was asked to indicate their level of agreement, or disagreement with the following statements:

1. I am satisfied with the types and availability of facilities provided by Snohomish County Parks and Recreation.

2. I am satisfied with the condition of Snohomish County Parks facilities.
3. I am satisfied with the security of Snohomish County Parks facilities.

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, were neutral, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with these statements. The results to these inquiries are as follows:

1. "I am satisfied with the types and availability of facilities provided by Snohomish County Parks and Recreation."  
Sixty-seven percent of respondents agreed with statement one, with 54 % noting that they 'somewhat agree' and 13% noting that they 'strongly agree'. Eighteen percent of respondents were neutral on this statement and a total of 15% disagreed with the statement (12% somewhat disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed – the difference between the sum of these two figures and 15% summary figure is due to rounding).
2. "I am satisfied with the condition of Snohomish County Parks facilities."  
Respondents were also generally positive about the condition of Parks facilities and 66% agreed with statement two, with 49% noting that they 'somewhat agree' and 17% strongly agreeing. A larger percentage (23%) of respondents were neutral on this statement, than the first statement, and 11% total disagreed with the statement (10% somewhat disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed).
3. "I am satisfied with the security of Snohomish County Parks facilities."  
Respondents were most ambivalent with statement three, with 34% noting that they were neutral on the statement. A total of 53% however did agree with the statement (41% somewhat and 12% strongly) while 14% disagreed (12% somewhat and 2% strongly).

A challenge that Parks faces in using survey results like these to judge public satisfaction with the services it provides is that responders often are not aware of which parks are provided by Snohomish County and tend to answer questions based on the parks that they frequent. These parks may be city or state operated and may not really reflect Snohomish County Park users' views of the Parks system. There are, of course, some respondents who responded specifically about the county

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parks system and the following are a sampling of some of the comments received,

*“The South County Park (off Olympic View Dr., near Perrinville) is a beautiful location for adding some longer walking trails. Having more people walking amidst these beautiful trees would be a nice change for south county residents. (Somehow discouraging paintball warriors would be nice, too) Meadowdale Beach Park is a gem. Keeping the parks free (with voluntary user fees) seems better than charging mandatory fees. Thanks for asking.”*

*“The Martha Lake Municipal Airport Park is AWESOME. A fabulous job was done on this park. It is used a lot by people in the nearby neighborhoods. The remodeled Lynnwood Rec Center is awesome as well.”* [Note that the Lynnwood Rec Center is not a Snohomish County facility, although Martha Lake Airport is]

*“My only “park” experience is Esperance in unincorporated Edmonds. It is not well maintained, and there is a user element that is creepy. They hang in the woods.”*

And an example demonstrating that park users often don’t differentiate between Snohomish County facilities and the others they frequent:

*“I live near Legion Park [City of Everett park]. I love seeing families enjoying the park and surrounding areas. The arboretum is lovely. I would like to see the park rangers around more often. Maybe the police driving through the park once in a while.”*

### Capacity of Facilities

In addition to tracking the condition of Parks’ facilities with the SnoStat Performance Measurement system, the number of park visitors is tracked on a monthly basis as well. In 2011, the total number of estimated visitors at Parks facilities was 4,159,810. This includes attendees at the annual fair at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds. Attendance at parks is greatly affected by weather and peak usage typically occurs during the months of May through September. ‘At capacity’ is occasionally reached in Parks’ facilities and is the point at which parking areas are full and the park is closed to additional entrants. This happens occasionally and typically occurs at water access parks during hot weather. In 2011, Kayak Point Park was closed six

times to day-use access and camping at the park was reserved at a rate of 24.85%. Given that typical campground occupancy rates for our area are 14 - 19%, this represents high usage of these facilities.

### **E. Parks Financing**

All actions pursued by the Parks Department require funding to support the effort. Funding for Parks is currently provided from a mix of sources. These include Snohomish County general funds, Real Estate Excise Tax (REET), grants, park impact mitigation fees, donations and sponsorships. Identification of funding for specific projects is determined each year through the county's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP allocates funding for the first year of the CIP then projects funding for projects over an additional five years. The CIP takes into consideration different funding sources.

Parks also generates revenues through a variety of methods, which are distributed back to the county's general fund (with the exception of the Evergreen State Fairgrounds-generated revenues), and which partially offset the funding provided for Parks operations. In 2011, Parks generated 72% revenue of the general funding received for that year. This equates to one of the highest return on investments for any park system in the United States.

In recent years, available funding from the general fund, REET and impact mitigation have been reduced at the same time that additional park facilities have been opening. Funding reductions have resulted in approximately a 20% reduction in staffing. Parks is continually seeking opportunities for other funding sources to help support and provide services. For example, there are opportunities to encourage private sector investment in parks and recreation. Private foundations, such as the Greater Everett Parks Foundation, have been created to support public institutions. Such organizations have the potential to augment public spending with private funds for the betterment of the park system overall. Special endowments may also be created to support specific parks or park functions, such as maintenance/stewardship.

Additional funding mechanisms may be available to the Parks Department through a variety of marketing strategies. These include such things as sponsorships, selling of naming rights and donations. For the first time, the Parks Department has recently created and filled a

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marketing staff position to pursue these possibilities, both for the Evergreen State Fairgrounds, and for the entire Parks system.

## **F. Parks and Sustainability**

Snohomish County Parks is very fiscally aware and seeks to achieve the highest cost recovery possible for its services, while balancing social and environmental sustainability in all actions. The general fund cost recovery for Parks in 2011 was one of the highest in the nation. Parks seeks to continue to increase this ratio through a mixture of appropriate user fees, increased use of facilities which charge parking fees, vendor contracts, selling of naming rights and sponsorships. Feedback provided through the public input process for this Plan indicated that user fees are a controversial issue and some participants felt that charging to use parks excludes certain members of the public from accessing those facilities. In particular, when access to recreation opportunities has been identified as one of the tools for addressing rising obesity rates and, when access to parks in general carries so many benefits (Appendix D), limitations caused by fees need to be considered. Response to the idea of vendors in parks, sponsorships and selling naming rights, however, was more accepted, although concern was expressed that these means be used appropriately (no one wanted to see neon in natural areas). In a time when staffing is historically low, and budgets have remained stagnant, or reduced, it is a challenge to continue to provide facilities and services to a growing community. It is likely that a mix of the methods above will need to be implemented to achieve increased cost recovery.

Parks is also interested in methods of providing services at a lower cost (thereby improving cost recovery) and has identified a number of mechanisms that could be implemented, including the naturalization program discussed earlier, efficiency upgrades and system improvements as tools for reducing inputs required to operate the Parks system. Parks also pays a number of county fees including Snohomish County Surface Water Management (SWM) service charges and Snohomish County Planning and Development (PDS) permitting fees, which could be eliminated through adoption of code stipulating that these operating costs are waived for Parks. Adoption of this code will require support from county officials and staff time to draft and shepherd the changes through the required process. Unfortunately, cost savings associated with these means of reducing input costs are expected to be offset by increasing operational needs such as requirements related to compliance with the county's National

Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and emergent issues such as the new 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Sustainability for Parks includes social sustainability; ensuring that users are able to access and enjoy park facilities. This relates to our basic mantra of 'safe, clean and open' but also relates to evaluating user fees, making sure they do not become a barrier to access. Access for all Parks' citizens also includes evaluating park sites for ADA compliance. New 2010 ADA regulations include requirements for recreation features that were not previously defined; this has prompted a system wide evaluation of compliance and recommended improvements. Ensuring ADA compliance also helps address provision of facilities for Snohomish County's aging population. Both the new regulations and degradation to existing facilities (e.g. root lift in sidewalks) have led to the need to identify areas of concern and develop a plan for addressing them, so that we ensure facilities are available to the public.

Parks seeks to contribute to county-wide environmental sustainability goals through operational practices which include maintenance of existing properties, acquisition of key habitat pieces, operational efficiencies, coordination with other departments and thoughtful design of new facilities. Parks manages approximately 10,780 acres of land, much of which is left in an undisturbed state. This land contributes to county-wide sustainability goals by providing habitat values, carbon sequestration, stormwater treatment and infiltration and flood attenuation, in some cases. Parks also participates in habitat acquisition, where practicable, in order to provide the values of protected open space to the community and environment.

Several Parks staff have also taken the lead to seek out methods to reduce impacts from operations. A pilot recycling program and separate waste compaction program at the fairgrounds both have been the result of staff initiative. These projects have been shared with other departments through participation in the county's Green Team, which provides the opportunity for departments to coordinate sustainability efforts and to expand the impact generated across the county. Lastly, although many of our older facilities are operational challenges, new park projects are designed to be as low-impact as possible. Integration of rain-gardens, pervious pavement, high efficiency fixtures, retained and enhanced natural areas, reduced lawn area and solar panels are common features in new parks and maintenance efficiencies are

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designed into the facilities whenever possible as well. Revenue expended on facility development must take into consideration the facilities income potential and the projected impact of the project on maintenance and operation services.

## **G. Role of Parks in Providing Recreation Services**

Besides Snohomish County Parks and Recreation Department (Parks), within Snohomish County there are several other recreation providers besides Parks. These include the United States Forest Service, Washington State Departments of Natural Resources and Parks, as well as services provided by the 20 cities/towns located within the county boundaries. In addition to these government-based recreation providers, a number of other recreation groups provide services, including the YMCA, the Boys & Girls Club and other private providers. The services these various groups provide range in scale from access to large open tracts for camping and hiking (federal and state typically) to local recreation programs and daycare (city and private organizations typically).

While each recreation provider generally has a defined area of service (e.g. state boundaries for state parks, city boundaries for city parks, etc.) there does exist some overlap, both in terms of population served and services provided.

The service area defined for Parks is all unincorporated areas within the county boundaries. This includes high density UGAs that are envisioned to be annexed at some point in the future (and would then no longer be in Parks' service area) and the very rural areas of the county where density is low. Within Parks' service area, Parks is responsible for providing facilities in a way that supports the goals and requirements of GMA as well as the policies of the General Policy Plan (GPP) and Countywide Planning Policies for Snohomish County (CPP). These documents lead to the following principles which define Parks' role in providing recreation services:

### **URBAN PARKS**

Parks are needed in urban areas to serve high density population centers. In UGAs, Parks has the responsibility to provide these kinds of parks, although ultimately it is envisioned that cities will assume responsibility of park services in those areas. Urban parks typically refer

to those parks which are classified by Parks as 'Neighborhood,' 'Community,' and in some cases, 'Open Space/Preserve.'

### **RURAL PARKS**

Snohomish County is primarily a regional park provider, siting facilities throughout the county that serve users beyond the immediately adjacent community. 'Regional' in this case typically refers to those parks classified by Parks as 'Regional,' 'Trail,' 'Special Use,' and in some cases, 'Open Space/Preserve.' These types of facilities offer valuable recreation opportunities to users as well as contribute to the quality of life within Snohomish County by providing locations for communities to come together, thus promoting community safety, open space, opportunities to connect with nature, economic benefits and an increase in property values. Rural parks serve residents in rural communities as well as provide a destination for urban residents.

### **TRAILS**

Parks also has a unique role in providing trails in its service area to connect cities and adjoining counties. These Trails provide long distance linkages between communities while also providing local trail experiences. Trails are a special area of focus for Parks and a Draft Snohomish County Regional Trail Planning and Management Guidelines document has been developed, which focuses on design and management guidelines for these trails.

### **PROGRAMS**

Parks does not have a mandate, per se, to provide programs and generally seeks to provide them where a need exists, where they are specific to a Parks facility (such as McCollum Pool, or Ranger programs at campgrounds) or where they can be provided through agreement with an outside provider. Programs are not considered to be a primary role of Parks, but are provided when appropriate, needed and/or take advantage of an opportunity to provide service to the community in a cost responsible manner.

## **H. Need Analysis**

The following is a summary of specific needs identified through development of this Plan.

### **PUBLIC INPUT –**

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Generally speaking, the public is very supportive of parks and appreciates access to park facilities and the benefits parks provide to individual users and also the community via open space preservation and habitat values. Snohomish County residents who participated in development of this Plan reflected state-wide prioritization of trails and walking/hiking opportunities as their top priority for facilities, followed by 'leisure' (picnic areas, camping and viewpoints) and water access as their next highest priorities.

Key take home points from the public input process are:

- There are a wide variety of recreational interests represented in the county.
- Trails are extremely popular and continuing to provide trail opportunities should be a priority. There is significant interest in opening the Whitehorse Trail.
- The Centennial Trail in particular is extremely popular and suggestions for improvement should be reviewed for feasibility.
- Focus on leisure facilities should be a priority, in particular picnic areas, camping, playgrounds and off-leash areas.
- Water access continues to be a priority and opportunities for expansion should be pursued. Saltwater access in particular is limited in the county and opportunities for acquisition should be explored.
- The comment was made repeatedly that the county should focus on maintaining existing facilities rather than developing new sites (this also fits with Countywide Planning Policies for Snohomish County (CPP) guidance which includes the policy "The county and cities should maximize the use of existing facilities to promote financial and energy conservation benefits and savings" (PS-11) (Snohomish County Tomorrow, 2011).
- Equestrian facilities are very popular in Snohomish County and there is significant interest in maintaining/expanding opportunities.
- There is a need for an aquatic facility in Snohomish County.
- Response to questions about funding parks drew polar opposite feedback. Special funding for parks is a sensitive issue and needs to be considered carefully before making changes to the current structure.

- Many citizens do not have a clear understanding of who Snohomish County Parks is, which parks are owned and managed by the county, and what programs the county provides. Parks could do a better job of identifying facilities that are offered through the county.
- There was significant interest in the Evergreen State Fairgrounds facility and improvements to it.
- There was significant interest in development of the shooting range outside of Sultan.

### **COMMUNITY PARKS**

Based on the current level-of-service for Parks, and analysis described in the previous chapter, the need exists to acquire a minimum of six new Community Park properties and develop two new Community Park facilities by 2025. Parks is currently accumulating park impact mitigation fees for acquisition of three of these properties and is on track for meeting the currently defined Parks level-of-service.

Analysis was completed in the 2007 Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan to identify the locations of new Community Park properties needed to meet level-of-service requirements. Identification of locations was based off population projections (estimated location and number) and existing facilities. This analysis was based on 2025 population projections and is still valid for identifying current acquisition targets.

The areas currently identified for Community Park acquisition are:

- Stanwood
- Arlington/Marysville UGA west of I-5
- Arlington/Marysville UGA east of I-5
- West of Granite Falls
- SW County UGA
- Skykomish River Valley

In the 2007 Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan, these same target areas were identified in addition to two other acquisitions for the SW County UGA. Since that Plan however, Miner's Corner and Hole In the Sky Park have been acquired and have partially filled the need in that area.

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The Community Park level-of-service basis for collection of park impact mitigation fees was adopted in 2005 and was limited to Community Parks, as Community Parks were thought to most closely serve new population needs. The continually refining definition of cities as urban service providers and the county as a rural service provider along with the values of all park classifications to serve county residents suggests that a review of Parks' level-of-service (LOS) methodology is warranted to ensure it reflects current recreation priorities. Other considerations that should be made during review of Parks' level-of-service methodology include RCO's recommended level-of-service methodology and potential change to allow expansion at current facilities as a method of meeting the level-of-service as well as supporting CPP and GPP policies to utilize existing county park sites to their full potential and best use.

A change in Parks' level-of-service methodology will require a number of steps including review of level-of-service methodologies currently in use throughout the area (including RCO method), development of proposed level-of-service methodology, potential revision of park impact fee mitigation collection areas, public input, fee study, County Council briefings and hearings, concurrent revision to the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP), adoption and implementation.

### **AQUATIC FACILITY**

Public interest in an aquatic facility was expressed during the Plan development process and Parks has been aware of the need for a regional facility, primarily through conversation with other providers. Within Snohomish County, three year-round community recreational public pools are provided by the Cities of Everett, Lynnwood and Mountlake Terrace and two summer facilities are provided by the City of Edmonds and Parks. Two semi-public pools are available through high schools in Lake Stevens and Marysville. However, programming at these facilities is limited and does not provide full community access.

In 1990 the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) published a recommendation for the number of public pools needed in any United States community based on population: one pool for every 20,000 citizens. Although this never became the national standard (due to variables such as other providers, area income levels, different types of pools, and desired programming by various age groups), data was collected documenting the number of public pools from various cities across the United States and in Washington State. From these cities it

was found that on average, the United States has approximately one public pool for every 45,570 people.

There are several different classes of pools, which should be considered when evaluating level-of-service for pool facilities. The pool classes are generally:

**Leisure/recreation** – includes the widest array of facility options that include zero-depth entry, water slides, eating areas, decks, and play apparatus. These facilities are often combined with amenities like concessions and group activity areas.

**Instructional & fitness** – includes learn-to-swim and lifesaving programs, fitness classes and lap swimming. Requires deeper (four to five feet) water and generous deck space for instruction.

**Therapy and rehabilitation** – often offered by medical organizations and requires warm shallow water.

**Competitive swimming** – requires specific lengths of 25 to 50 meters, depth of five to seven feet, eight to ten lanes (each eight to ten feet wide), and spectator seating.

**Competitive diving** – requires one and three-meter diving boards, with optional platform diving for national and international events. May require separate, deep water, 13-foot minimum tank.

**Team competitions** – includes competitive water polo and synchronized swimming. Requires a minimum pool depth of seven feet and large pool area. Can use competition pool if deep enough.

**Special events/rentals** – separate areas of facilities used in conjunction with the aquatic facilities for birthday parties, corporate events and community gatherings.

**Social/Relaxation** – can be picnic areas or landscaped areas, but are generally non-aquatic spaces that serve to integrate social and aquatic activities. Most often associated with leisure/recreation function above.

Current population figures for Snohomish County place total population (unincorporated and incorporated together) at approximately 717,000. Given the number of public semi-leisure/recreation pools available, this equates to a service level of one pool per 102,429 individuals. There are additional pools available within the county, primarily provided by clubs

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or the YMCA, but because of their smaller size and requirement for membership, these “instructional & fitness” type facilities do not address the recommended level-of-service.

In addition to the deficiency in leisure/recreation type public pools identified by NRPA’s recommendation, there is an even greater need for a competitive swimming, diving and team competition facility.

Currently the only facility which completely meets this need is available in King County. North of King County and south of the Canadian border, no competition level (eight to ten lane, 50-meter) pools are available.

Competitive swimming is a popular recreational activity in our area and five clubs are active in Snohomish County. A competitive aquatics facility would serve these swimmers, allow for expansion of the sport and bring revenue to the area during competitive events. Providing a facility such as this would fit Parks’ role as a regional facility provider.

A preliminary study has been conducted to analyze the need and market for a regional aquatic center. The analysis of the Snohomish County market indicated the following-

- The primary (Snohomish County) and secondary (Skagit and Whatcom Counties) service area for a regional, fully competitive aquatic facility has a population of nearly 600,000.
- While there are five indoor and two outdoor public pools within these service areas, many of these facilities are older and reaching the end of their lifespan (estimated to be up to three of the total).
- It is anticipated that during the course of the next five years, there will be a net loss of at least two aquatic facilities.
- Most school districts do not have their own pools and must use other indoor and outdoor pools in the area
- The only true indoor competitive pool able to host regional events is the King County Aquatic Center and it is not located within the service area of Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom Counties.
- All but one of the existing seven pools are conventional facilities with no leisure amenities - the recreational swimming market is only served by one facility at the time of the study [Note that the Lynnwood Recreation Center has completed its aquatic

facility upgrades since this study and now includes leisure amenities].

- Interviews with Snohomish County aquatic teams indicate that they have to limit team size and practice due to the lack of facilities - many teams have to use multiple facilities to serve their needs.
- With the lack of pool times, many aquatic teams are unable to provide services to meet demand.

With an understanding of the current aquatic facilities, their program and capacity limitations, and realizing that the situation will only get worse in the coming years, a regional, fully competitive, multi-aquatic sport venue is crucial to support the area's swimming needs.

### **WATER ACCESS**

Snohomish County is a water-based community, with approximately 460 lakes, two major rivers (the Snohomish and Stillaguamish) and a multitude of smaller rivers, creeks and streams. Additionally, Snohomish County is bordered on its western edge by Puget Sound, offering incredible opportunities for water-based recreation and scenic viewpoint opportunities.

Snohomish County residents value access to water and 'water access' ranked third among the recreation categories survey respondents prioritized. Many water-based recreation sites exist in the county and Parks provides Kayak Point, Meadowdale, Picnic Point, Lake Goodwin, Wenberg, Wyatt, Flowing Lake, Twin Rivers and River Meadows Parks as well as Field's Riffle. However, within Snohomish County, saltwater access is relatively scarce.

According to the Washington State Coastal Atlas (Washington State Department of Ecology, 2010) there are 27 public beaches within Snohomish County. Although this may seem like a high number, by comparison, the Coastal Atlas reported 50 public beaches in Skagit County, 97 in King County and 90 in Pierce County. This, along with the heavy use saltwater parks receive, indicates that a shortage exists and should be a priority for acquisition and expansion of existing facilities, where appropriate. The General Policy Plan (GPP) also supports water access and Policy ED 6.B.5 states "The county shall encourage water-

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dependent and water-related tourism development and use of shorelines consistent with the Shoreline Management Act.”

### **RECREATION AREAS**

Due to the continued urbanization of Snohomish County, Parks’ focus on rural facilities and the economic benefits that parks bring to communities, an idea has emerged to develop ‘Recreation Areas’ that concentrate recreation amenities for user benefit, operational efficiencies and economic development. The GPP notes that “Snohomish County shall support ventures in resource tourism and outdoor recreation that are financially viable and environmentally responsible” (ED 6.B.2). The identification and promotion of Recreation Areas support this policy. Four Recreation Areas are envisioned at this time: the Sky Valley Recreation Corridor (defined by Hwy 2 and stretching from the City of Snohomish to the county border), the Snohomish River Estuary Recreation Area (estuary area between the Cities of Everett and Marysville), the Seven Lakes Recreation Area (west of I-5 between the Stillaguamish River to the north and the Tulalip Reservation to the south) and Whitehorse Recreation Corridor (defined by the Whitehorse Trail stretching from the City of Arlington to the City of Darrington).

These four areas have been identified as already containing significant recreational resources and as having opportunities for enhanced user experiences. For example, within the Seven Lakes Recreational Area, Parks already has the following developed facilities: Gissberg Twin Lakes Park (fishing, swimming casual trail use), Wenberg Park (camping, boat launch, swimming and other day use), Lake Goodwin Park (swimming, day use) and Kayak Point Park and Golf Course (golf course, camping, boat launch, saltwater access, day use). In addition to these facilities, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) operates six boat launches in the area and Parks has three large, undeveloped landholdings, which includes undeveloped land at Kayak Point. Development and promotion of this recreation area would benefit users by clustering recreational activities so that when camping, for example, visitors would have the opportunity to have a lake experience, saltwater experience and, following further development, possible hiking and/or mountain biking opportunities. This type of development also provides benefits to Parks by clustering staff and maintenance resources into a smaller area, thereby limiting travel time and staff duplications. The Seven Lakes Recreation Area has added benefit of being located

adjacent to I-5, so that access is simplified and convenient for the park visitor.

The Sky Valley Recreation Corridor is currently envisioned to stretch east along Hwy 2 from the City of Snohomish to the county line. Within this area, Parks operates the Evergreen State Fairgrounds and plans to develop three new facilities, currently referred to as Steelhead Park, the Lawson property and the Sultan Shooting Range. Significant holdings are operated by other providers within this area and include State Parks (Wallace Falls), DNR and United States Forest Service properties. This area has enormous potential to draw visitors from the Seattle area as it is within easy access by car and offers significant opportunities for hiking, ORVs and others. Significant portions of this area have also been identified on the Snohomish County Growth Management Act (GMA) Comprehensive Plan Open Space Corridors and Green Belt Areas map as agricultural, forest or wilderness areas, and therefore have important open space value. Incorporating recreation into this area fits into the goals of open space designated areas and capitalizes on the scenic benefits present in this area. The Evergreen State Fairgrounds would be a key component of this Recreation Area. The site is located on Hwy 2, providing a convenient jumping off place for the Sky Valley. The property includes 96 recreational vehicle camping sites in addition to all the other amenities to the site.

The Snohomish River Estuary is located between the Cities of Everett and Marysville. Totalling approximately 19.5 square miles, approximately 4,000 acres of this area is in public ownership (roughly 32%). Snohomish County owns approximately 1,800 acres (including land in SWM custody). WDFW owns approximately 1,400 acres and other public land holders in the estuary include the Port of Everett, the City of Everett and the City of Marysville. The Tulalip Tribes are an additional large land holder in the estuary. The estuary is a rich recreational area which provides opportunities for hiking, kayaking, bird watching and hunting. The proximity of this large area to significant population centers offers great potential for public use, enjoyment and appreciation. Full development of this recreational area requires coordination with the various land owners and development of a recreation plan.

The Whitehorse Recreation Corridor is defined by the Whitehorse Trail, which stretches from the City of Arlington to the City of Darrington and links to the Centennial Trail at its western terminus. Currently,

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approximately seven miles of this trail are open adjacent to the City of Darrington. Development of the remainder of this corridor is a priority and it is ultimately envisioned that the trail will provide mixed use and may include camping opportunities at some of the trailheads. This area is defined by the trail and the north fork of the Stillaguamish River; the two cross multiple times along the alignment. In addition, the Whitehorse Recreation Corridor also includes significant equestrian opportunities and is sure to be popular with the horse community.

### **EQUESTRIAN OPPORTUNITIES**

Representatives from the equestrian community were major participants in the public input process for this Plan and indicated a wide variety of equestrian needs/concerns related to recreational opportunities in Snohomish County. Equestrian issues are of particular importance in our county because of the unusually high number of horse owners who reside here. Actual statistics are hard to find (there is no horse registry) but the Snohomish County 4-H Youth Horse Program webpage reports more than 1,600 youth participants and that it is the largest 4-H youth development program in the world. State statistics are also high, and a 2009 Seattle Times article noted that Washington State ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in number of total horses nationally and that the per capita ranking of the state is near the top (Broom, 2009). The per capita horse population in Snohomish County is said to be the highest of all the counties in the nation, but statistics to back that claim up have not been found.

Parks' main equestrian facilities currently include Lord Hill Regional Park (forested trails), Centennial Trail (long distance multiuse trail) and the Evergreen State Fairgrounds (practice and competition arenas, event space and barns). Public meeting participants were very interested in a number of future Park developments, in particular development of the Whitehorse Trail, with associated trailheads, and trails accessed through the recently acquired West Lake Roesiger property.

Equestrian recreational needs are diverse and a central group representing the various interests does not exist. Needless to say 'more' and 'better' was the common request of all the equestrian groups. This could equate to additional backcountry trails, better use of the Centennial Trail (interaction problems were a common equestrian complaint regarding this facility), improvements/expansion of the fairgrounds facility, installation of carting courses and other improvements.

In order to provide meaningful improvements for the equestrian community, a study of current equestrian opportunities in the county needs to be completed and an evaluation of specific improvement needs and opportunities for linkages should be completed.

### **I. Vision**

To summarize some of the key points that have emerged out of development of this plan and which form Parks' Vision for operations over the next six years:

*Parks can save the world* - There are innumerable benefits provided to our community by the provision of parks. These range from health benefits, to providing alternative transportation options, to open space benefits, to economic development opportunities which support quality of life for county residents. We wouldn't necessarily go so far as to say that parks can save the world, but we're not not saying that either.

*Parks seeks to operate in as sustainable a manner as possible* – Sustainability for the Parks Department means seeking to have as high a return on investment as possible, while striving to ensure user fees do not become barriers to park use. Parks seeks to increase revenues through a mix of appropriate user fees, vendors in parks, selling of naming rights, sponsorships and other innovative funding opportunities. Parks seeks to be socially sustainable by ensuring access to parks facilities both by evaluating access fees to ensure they are appropriate and don't become barriers to use and also by ensuring ADA accessibility to the park system. Parks also strives to contribute to environmental sustainability through management of existing properties, acquisition of key habitat holdings and improvements in operations.

*Parks has a responsibility to provide park facilities in UGAs*– Unincorporated UGAs fall within the service area for Snohomish County and the GMA requires that urban services be provided in urban areas. Parks has this responsibility but envisions that urban facilities (typically Neighborhood and Community Parks) will ultimately be supported by cities as is stated in the CPP. Transition of provision of park facilities in urban areas, from the county to cities may occur via property transfer or by operational agreement.

*Parks is a regional service provider* – Snohomish County Parks has a unique role as a regional service provider and should provide facilities

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that serve rural and urban residents via provision of unique, often larger, destination parks, such as water access, camping and hiking opportunities.

*Parks is a regional trail provider* – Because the county service area connects cities and adjacent counties, Parks has a special role in providing long distance trails. These trails are immensely popular with the public and serve to provide alternative transportation options. Parks has developed a draft Trails Plan that focuses on provision of this service and efforts to continue development of trails should be prioritized.

*Parks has a limited role in providing programs* –There are many program providers within the county, including cities, YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs and others. Parks staff currently provide programs where a need is identified, or where it specifically fits a Parks facility (such as swimming lessons at McCollum). Other programs are offered by Parks through vendor contract or agreements with other entities and it is envisioned that this approach will be continued. One-on-one opportunities via volunteer and internship programs will also continue and potential partnerships and/or specific programs will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into consideration need, return on investment and existing relationships with partners and facilities. Parks predominantly supports programs through provision of diverse facilities where programs can occur (such as the fairgrounds) and will continue to consider requests for specific facilities to support emerging recreation needs.

*Parks' level-of-service methodology should be reviewed* – Parks' level-of-service methodology currently only sets minimum standards for Community Parks and is used as the basis for park impact mitigation fee collection. As Parks focuses in its role as a regional service provider, Parks level-of-service methodology should be reviewed to evaluate how it aligns with goals identified in this Plan as well as RCO's recommended level-of-service and updated, as appropriate.

*Parks' role in providing urban parks should be reduced* – As Parks transitions away from urban parks, efforts should be made to transfer facilities in those areas to city jurisdictions and to collaborate with cities on planning and operation and maintenance of facilities in areas anticipated to be annexed.

*Parks should focus efforts on expanding/improving recreational opportunities in Recreation Areas* – The benefits to users, the community and operations by focusing on recreation areas are significant. There are currently four Recreation Areas identified: Sky Valley Recreation Corridor, Snohomish River Estuary, Seven Lakes and the Whitehorse Recreation Corridor.

*Parks should focus on adding amenities to existing facilities rather than establishing new parks* – This statement was heard repeatedly from the public and also reflects CPP PS-11, which states “The county and cities should maximize the use of existing facilities to promote financial and energy conservation benefits and saving.” As well as GPP Policy 7.A.3, which states “The county shall place high priority on using existing county park sites to their full potential and best use for passive or active recreation.” Implementing this point as part of Parks’ vision for the next six years will also help support Parks’ sustainability efforts.

*Parks should focus on improvements at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds* – The Fairgrounds offers a unique opportunity to provide diverse recreation services and significant revenue generation opportunities due to the facility size, diversity and location on Hwy 2. The property also has the potential to act as a ‘hub’ in the Sky Valley Recreation Area, providing a jumping-off location for recreation seekers. The facility has significant upgrade needs, however, and capital investment is needed to maintain the current facilities and take advantage of expansion at the site.

*Parks should focus on renovation of existing facilities* – The Parks system includes many aging parks that require significant maintenance inputs and/or include out-of-date or inefficient infrastructure (power, water, etc.). The public repeatedly commented that they would prefer Parks to focus on existing facilities, rather than developing new ones and, well-used parks, such as Kayak Point and Flowing Lake, have significant improvement needs. In addition to basic needs such as replacing lifted asphalt and failing structures, improvements which focus on updating stormwater systems would bring facilities up to current standards and integrating ADA improvements in the parks would provide increased accessibility to the Parks system. A challenge in completing renovations is identifying funding to complete the work. A possible method of addressing this is to create an account for park

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maintenance/renovations created from park revenue. This potential should be evaluated and implemented if practicable.

*Parks should focus on provision of equestrian facilities and an aquatic center* – These two types of specialized facilities were identified through development of this Plan as needed within Snohomish County. Within the aquatic needs identified, a specific need for a competitive facility was identified. Equestrian facilities are also a priority to serve the unique population of Snohomish County. The equestrian community lends heavily to the recreation culture of Snohomish County and providing facilities for this population will help ensure continuation of that identity.

*Parks should continue to acquire appropriate lands which meet the goals and objectives of this Plan* – A prioritization scheme already exists for evaluating proposed acquisitions, which are brought to the department and identified acquisition needs are pursued or taken advantage of, as appropriate. Although there is a current sentiment to focus on existing properties, rather than developing new sites, some acquisition will be needed to meet the currently defined level-of-service for Community Parks (until such time as the LOS methodology for parks is modified). In addition, unforeseen acquisition opportunities may arise which further the goals of this Plan, or GPP, and should be pursued. Waterfront property, for example, is a high priority for park acquisition, but finding large enough pieces of property to support public recreation are unusual to find. Taking advantage of these types of opportunities should continue to be a priority.

*Parks should continue to seek opportunities to provide water access* – Water access is a high priority for Snohomish County residents and relatively few public access points are available within its boundaries. Where possible, acquisition or expansion of services at water access sites should be provided.

*Parks should continue to seek opportunities to provide revenue to the department and be innovative in its approaches to funding* – Parks has been taking aggressive steps in recent years to increase the revenue generated by the department and increase the amount of private dollars brought in through sponsorships, partnerships and contracts. Although the question of increased fees to support Parks was a controversial topic in the survey feedback, one-on-one feedback

obtained through public meetings clarified that the public is generally supportive of sponsorships and vendor agreements for parks, as long as they are used appropriately. Parks will continue to build upon recent efforts and is focusing on increased marketing efforts to expand private investments. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) will be used to outline Parks' expenditures on capital projects and funding needed to maintain defined level-of-service will be monitored to ensure Parks can meet the required minimums.

*Parks will continue to provide and maintain Open Space/Preserve properties in its inventory* – Parks has a strong presence in preservation of county open space and will continue to maintain these lands and seek ways of providing enhancement management. Parks will also continue partnerships with other groups to improve existing properties and/or partner for new acquisitions, as appropriate.

*Parks seeks to partner with other jurisdictions* – Parks seeks to partner with other jurisdictions as appropriate to provide recreational services in an efficient manner. Other recreation providers face similar challenges to provision of recreation services and coordination between groups may result in efficiencies in providing services to the residents of Snohomish County.

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## IV. Intergovernmental Coordination

As a part of the process of Plan development, a Snohomish County recreation providers' group initiated meetings in 2011 to discuss shared priorities for providing services, common challenges and opportunities for interjurisdictional coordination. Participants in these discussions included the county, cities and the YMCA. School districts, State Parks, Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Boys & Girls Club were also invited to attend, but have not participated yet. The recreation providers' group is working to seek efficiencies and to work together toward common goals.

Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT) is another interjurisdictional coordination effort that works at the policy level (Countywide Planning Policies for Snohomish County (CPP)) to identify areas of focus for the different members and coordinate on larger topics of concern within the county. The CPP provide specific policies including the incorporation of Urban Growth Area (UGA)/Municipal Urban Growth Area (MUGA) plans into comprehensive planning.

Through the recreation providers' group meetings, SCT efforts and recent developments in the Washington State budget, a number of key points pertinent to interjurisdictional coordination have emerged-

- There is benefit in coordinating, where appropriate, to increase efficiencies in recreation provision and create larger benefit by integrating systems.
- Cities and YMCAs are strong program providers and typically provide sports programs, camps, etc.
- Every jurisdiction is struggling with funding issues, both for development and ongoing maintenance and operation as well as staffing levels due to wide-spread cutbacks.
- Washington State Parks is currently considering a reduction in staffing of approximately 160 positions (out of a staff of 500 people) due to budget shortfalls. State Parks is not considering any park closures at this time, but there may be opportunities to work together in order to coordinate park services.
- Snohomish County UGA/MUGA plans shall be taken into consideration when planning facilities within those jurisdictions.

- Cities within whose UGA/MUGA boundaries parks are planned should be invited to participate in facility planning and funding efforts.
- Opportunities for property transfer may be appropriate when county facilities fall within city or UGA boundaries.

Partnership opportunities for acquisition and development of needed facilities may also be appropriate. Snohomish County has previously partnered with the City of Everett and Port of Everett to acquire the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Boat launch in Everett and has also partnered with the City of Mill Creek to acquire the Tambark Creek Park site. Operational partnerships that the county has secured include an agreement with the City of Arlington for operation of Twin Rivers Park and a similar agreements with the City of Darrington for Whitehorse Community Park and with the Cities of Lynnwood and Edmonds and the Edmonds School District for Meadowdale Playfields.

As Snohomish County seeks to address the needs identified in the previous chapter, partnerships with other recreation providers will be pursued as appropriate. Conversations with the City of Marysville have already identified an interest in a recreational facility in the area identified in county plans for Community Park acquisition. The potential for partnership on this project is significant. Similarly, planning for the four identified Recreation Areas will require joint planning with other recreation providers. For example, creation of a plan for the Snohomish River Estuary Recreation Area will require, and benefit from, coordination with the other public land holders in the area: Cities of Marysville and Everett, Port of Everett, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and Tulalip Tribes.

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## V. Implementation Measures

### A. Overview

The following implementation measures are divided into two sections. The first section addresses level-of-service needs identified in the Snohomish County Capital Facility Plan (CFP) and provides implementation measures to meet those needs. The second section provides a broader set of goals, objectives and strategies which address the needs identified in previous sections and/or are tools to facilitate satisfaction of the identified need (e.g. financing as a broad implementation measure to address provision of identified facilities). This section is provided in the context of planning criteria provided by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and does not supersede the other components of the Snohomish County Growth Management Act Comprehensive Plan. Topic areas for this section are roughly organized around the subject areas of the Snohomish County General Policy Plan (GPP) and Countywide Planning Policies for Snohomish County (CPP).

### B. CFP Implementation Measures

#### LEVEL-OF-SERVICE

GOAL CFP-1: COMMUNITY PARKS – Continue to monitor level-of-service provision for Community Parks (land and developed facilities) and acquire and develop Community Parks, as needed, to ensure adherence to level-of-service standards identified in the CFP.

Objective CFP 1.1: Complete an annual Statement of Assessment, as a part of the Snohomish County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), to track current level-of-service provision for Community Park land and facilities;

Objective CFP 1.2: As new population forecasts become available, evaluate future, projected Community Park needs and develop a strategy for meeting the need; and

Objective CFP 1.3: Review Parks impact mitigation fee basis, as necessary, to ensure fees are collected to support Community Park acquisition and development, as provided for in Snohomish County Code 30.66A.

GOAL CFP-2: NON-COMMUNITY PARK TARGETS – Implement uncompleted, non-Community Park, target level-of-service projects identified in CFP as practicable.

Objective CFP 2.1: Pursue uncompleted, non-Community Park, target level-of-service projects as funding and the need is identified.

## **C. RCO Implementation Measures**

### **FINANCE AND OPERATIONS**

GOAL FO-1: VISITOR EXPERIENCE – Parks seeks to provide safe, enjoyable and attractive parks in order to ensure a quality visitor experience.

Objective FO 1.1: Maintain parks in such a manner as to ensure facilities are clean and meet standards for the facility.

GOAL FO-2: FINANCES – Parks seeks to continue to increase department revenue and be innovative in securing funding in order to meet facility provision requirements defined through the adopted level-of-service for park facilities as well as other Parks priorities.

Strategy FO 2.1: Parks will continue to seek opportunities to increase department revenue and be innovative in its approaches to funding;

Objective FO 2.2: Employ professional marketing staff with the training, experience, contacts, dedication and expertise to focus on the marketing of naming rights, sponsorships and other revenue producing entrepreneurial programs for Parks; and

Strategy FO 2.3: Explore the potential to create a maintenance fund, which would utilize revenue from facility agreements to fund lifespan asset replacements.

GOAL FO-3: LEVEL-OF-SERVICE – Utilize a level-of-service methodology to monitor provision of park facilities, identify priority Park projects and provide a basis for collection of park impact mitigation fees. The level-of-service should reflect identified Parks priorities and future needs.

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Objective FO 3.1: Starting in 2013, evaluate current level-of-service methodology to determine how it meets Parks needs identified in this Plan. As part of the evaluation, review recommended level-of-service methodology provided by the RCO.

GOAL FO-4: SUSTAINABILITY - Operate in as sustainable a manner as possible with consideration of financial, environmental and social implications of department actions.

Strategy FO 4.1: Evaluate maintenance and operation impacts of new development proposals in order to determine inputs that will be required by the proposal and associated impacts to department operations;

Strategy FO 4.2: When considering methods for revenue generation, prioritize methodologies such as sponsorships, agreements with vendors and selling of naming rights over increased user fees, but consider implementation of user fee increases as appropriate;

Objective FO 4.3: Evaluate and implement methodologies to reduce parking fees, in order to eliminate fee barriers for low-income persons. This may result in parking charged by the hour, or non-charged days or some other mechanism;

Strategy FO 4.4: Whenever possible, replace aging infrastructure with updated, energy/water efficient components as a part of park maintenance activities; and

Objective FO 4.5: Complete an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) inventory of the parks system to evaluate compliance with new standards and develop plan for implementing needed improvements.

GOAL FO-5: PROGRAMS – Support provision of recreation programming throughout the county, primarily through the provision of suitable facilities, but also by providing individual programs as appropriate.

Strategy FO 5.1: Support recreation programs provided by others, through provision of facilities, as appropriate; and

Strategy FO 5.2: Provide programs through Parks on a case by case basis where the program is unique to a Parks facility, fulfills a community need (e.g. specialized recreation) and/or provides net revenue to the department.

## **FACILITIES**

**GOAL CF-1: PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS** – Pursue property acquisitions which meet the goals of Snohomish County plans and/or, which take advantage of unique situations to acquire property which would be of benefit to the county.

Objective CF 1.1: Work with the Snohomish County Parks Advisory Board ('Advisory Board') to update the acquisition goals and guidelines used for evaluating acquisition opportunities in order to ensure it reflects priorities identified within the 2013 Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan;

Objective CF 1.2: Utilize Advisory Board acquisition goals and guidelines to evaluate potential park acquisitions; and

Objective CF 1.3: Pursue acquisitions which are identified as a priority, if funding is available.

**GOAL CF-2: EXISTING FACILITIES** – Utilize existing facilities to an appropriate level by maintaining/renovating aging facilities and adding services, as appropriate, to increase carrying capacity.

Objective CF 2.1: As funding allows, renovate a minimum of one entire, existing, aging park facility. Priority for renovation will be given to facilities which currently require significant maintenance due to facility age, are in need of energy/water efficiency upgrades, are in close proximity to water bodies and do not incorporate current stormwater standards, and facilities which are heavily used and/or significant revenue generators;

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Objective CF 2.2: As funding allows, renovate or replace a minimum of one additional building at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds; and

Strategy CF 2.3: Prioritize expansion of existing facilities over development of new sites, except as required to meet level-of-service requirements, or as needed to address a goal in this Plan or another county plan.

GOAL CF-3: REGIONAL FACILITIES - Parks has a unique role in providing regional facilities which serve residents throughout the county and provide destination recreation opportunities. Provision of regional facilities is a priority for Parks.

GOAL CF-4: URBAN FACILITIES –Parks has a responsibility to provide park facilities in unincorporated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), but works to ultimately transfer those properties to city jurisdictions and also to coordinate with other recreation providers in those areas in order to achieve provision of recreation facilities.

Strategy CF 4.1: When developing parks in UGAs, the city jurisdiction that is expected to annex the area will be included in the planning process for the park facility as much as possible and any UGA/MUGA plans for the area will be taken into consideration;

Strategy CF 4.2: When developing parks in UGAs, Parks will seek to work with the city jurisdiction that is to annex the area with the goal of entering into joint agreements for maintenance and operation or facility transfer, as appropriate; and

Objective CF 4.3: Parks will identify parks suitable for transfer to city jurisdictions, based on location of the facility and priorities of Parks and enter into discussions with the jurisdictions to negotiate transfer of the facilities.

GOAL CF-5: TRAILS – Parks is a world class provider of multiuse linear parks, which provide connectivity to other trail systems, as well as public parks and other amenities.

Objective CF 5.1: Work to develop additional portions of the Centennial and Whitehorse Trails;

Strategy CF 5.2: Prioritize acquisition of properties needed to complete Centennial Trail alignment, south of the City of Snohomish; and

Strategy CF 5.3: Coordinate with Snohomish and King County cities as well as Skagit and King Counties in the planning and construction of regional trail systems, as they cross jurisdictional boundaries.

GOAL CF-6: SPECIFIC FACILITY NEEDS – Parks seeks to address specific recreational needs identified through the planning process for update of the Parks Plan.

Objective CF 6.1: Conduct a study to evaluate the need for provision of a regional aquatic facility in Snohomish County. Study should build on previous studies and include an evaluation of preferred location, funding and partnership opportunities;

Objective CF 6.2: Identify existing equestrian opportunities in Snohomish County and the evaluate need for additional facilities as well as opportunities for linkages between services;

Strategy CF 6.2a: At parks where equestrian access can be provided, incorporate necessary infrastructure to support equestrian use (e.g. trailer parking, specifically designated trails, etc.) into development plans, as appropriate and feasible;

Objective CF 6.3: As funding allows, pursue opportunities for additional water access acquisition and development, with a priority on providing saltwater access;

Objective CF 6.4: Incorporate popular amenities into new and existing parks as appropriate. Popular amenities identified through this planning process include: playgrounds, off-leash areas, picnicking opportunities and camping;

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Objective CF 6.5: Continue efforts to develop the shooting range outside of Sultan, utilizing private and non-profit partnerships as much as possible; and

Objective CF 6.6: Continue efforts to develop the Wellington Hills park site to incorporate ballfields as well as other community amenities.

GOAL CF-7: RECREATION AREAS – Parks will focus on opportunities for expanding and improving recreational opportunities in identified Recreation Areas.

Objective CF 7.1: Develop plans for the four defined Recreation Areas (Seven Lakes, Snohomish River Estuary, Whitehorse Corridor and Sky Valley), identifying existing recreational opportunities, potential partners and opportunities for expansion and improvement of recreation within the area; and

Strategy CF 7.2: Consider additional Recreation Areas as promoted by outside groups, or within the department, as they are proposed.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL NR-1: OPEN SPACE/PRESERVE - Parks recognizes the value open space/preserve properties provide to the citizens of Snohomish County and will continue to manage and maintain open space/preserve properties in Parks inventory and seek opportunities for natural resource enhancement, as appropriate.

Objective NR 1.1: Explore techniques to manage and protect forest lands in county ownership;

Strategy NR 1.2: Provide appropriate public access to natural resource areas in order to promote understanding and support of natural areas;

Strategy NR 1.3: Partner with public and private organizations to assist in habitat improvement implementation, monitoring and research on sensitive county park lands;

Strategy NR 1.4: Partner with local environmental education providers to provide environmental programs on county park lands; and

Strategy NR 1.5: Partner with public and private organizations to acquire, preserve and responsibly steward natural areas on county park lands as a key component of the county's habitat preservation strategy.

### INTERJURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION

GOAL IC-1: INTERJURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION - Parks strives to partner with other recreation providers in Snohomish County, in order to provide recreation services to the residents of Snohomish County, in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Strategy IC 1.1: The county shall work with cities to create an integrated system of passive and active parks, open spaces, and trails, which are accessible to all residents of the county and cities, and provide for a variety of recreational activities and contribute to neighborhood or community identity;

Objective IC 1.2: The county shall continue to promote coordination between Snohomish County recreation providers in order to create efficiencies in recreation service provision and collaboration dealing with issues of shared concern; and

Strategy IC 1.3: The county shall work with state and federal entities to promote integration between facilities and ensure continued recreational access to public facilities as appropriate.

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